

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



# Fire This Time!



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**INJUSTICE FACING INDIGENOUS WOMEN  
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# The New Era of War and Occupation: War, Occupation, Destruction, Poverty & Refugee Crisis What is the Future?

By Nita Palmer

The body of a once-smiling toddler washed up on a Greek beach. A father crying and embracing his family after completing the perilous journey to Greece. Young children, terrified, pushing through a wall of riot police in Macedonia. These are the victims of the new era of war and occupation in which we live. After a decade and a half of bombing, destruction, and destabilization by the US and NATO throughout the Middle East and Africa, humanity's suffering can no longer be contained within the borders of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, or so many other countries. Refugees are landing on Europe's shores by the thousands, bringing with them the painful, vulgar, horrible truth of the US/NATO wars in their respective homelands.

The journey for refugees, whether by land or by sea, is incredibly perilous. Thousands die along the way, of drowning, dehydration, or injuries. Many pay thousands of dollars to smugglers only to be turned back by authorities in the countries in which they arrive. Yet between 800,000 to one million refugees have arrived in Europe this year alone. Globally, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has reached 60 million – the highest number since the Second World War.

Why would so many risk their lives for an uncertain future in a foreign land? Not for a better life, but for any life at all. As one young Syrian woman stated in an interview with al-Jazeera, “drowning was better than being beheaded”.

## No Home Left in Syria

Thousands of Syrians share similar stories – of fleeing towns taken over by ISIS, of neighbourhoods destroyed by bombs, of a happy life suddenly halted by the war. Over 250,000 people have died in



Syria, whether in bombings by foreign forces or caught in fighting between the Syrian government and ISIS or so-called ‘moderate rebels’ with ties to both the US and al-Qaeda.

This story of destruction and tragedy, of shooting and bombing and terrifying men wielding guns is the only story of Syria that many know. But before the war, Syria was a beautiful and diverse country, shaped by ancient and beautiful Roman, Egyptian and Persian architecture. It was a country of diverse people and religions. This is the Syria which has been lost.

Before the war, Syria had one of the most advanced education systems in the Middle East, with nearly 100% school enrolment in primary school. Today, enrolment is below 50% across the country, and as low as 6% in some areas, according to a report by Save the Children. Nearly a quarter of school buildings have been destroyed by bombing, according to the same report.

Syria also had one of the best health care systems in the region, with a life expectancy of 79 years – about the same as the United States. The majority of health problems in the country were comparable with those in the West – cancer, diabetes, and so on. Since the war, childhood vaccination rates have dropped from 90% to 50%, resulting in the outbreak of numerous diseases. In just

four years, life expectancy has dropped by more than two decades (United Nations Relief Agency). It is not only bombing and fighting that are killing people, but a desperate lack of medications and medical care due to destruction of hospitals and pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities.

Syria is not a country which ‘has always been at war’ but was a thriving, modern country until just a few short years ago. The US intervened in 2011, supporting the so-called ‘rebels’ of the Free Syrian Army to fight against the independent Syrian government. Many of these ‘moderate rebels’ went on to join ISIS. Since then, the country has collapsed into chaos and civil war, forcing more than 11 million people to flee for their lives. In response to this terror which they created, the US and their allies – including Canada – began bombing ISIS targets in Syria, killing at least hundreds of innocent men, women, and children.

## Tragedy in Afghanistan: Made in USA

In Afghanistan, nearly four decades of foreign intervention and civil war have left the country fractured and in chaos. Many Afghans today cannot remember a time when there was peace in their country. However, this is not to say, as many political pundits do, that Afghanistan is a savage or irredeemable land. In fact it was only a generation ago that Kabul



was known as the “Paris of Central Asia”. The country was a destination for tourists, hippies, and adventurers, who were awed by the beautiful gardens and towering, snow-capped mountains. Women attended university and became doctors and engineers alongside men. The country was poor, yes, but on a path to a bright future.

The Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan from 1979-1989. In response, the US began training and funding backward and fundamentalist elements in the country to fight the Soviet troops. The US Agency for International Development even produced books for schoolchildren “filled with talk of jihad and [featuring] drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers, and mines” according to the Washington Post. Some of extremists they supported in fighting the Soviet Union later went on to form the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

The US then invaded Afghanistan in 2001, under the pretext of bringing a better life to Afghans and ridding the country of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, which the US itself unleashed on the country. However, nearly a decade and a half later, there have been no fundamental improvements to basic human rights. Nearly three-quarters of the country remains without basic sanitation facilities. Another 22% have no access to clean drinking water. While some schools have been built, many of them are closed, understaffed, or falling apart.

Not only have the US and NATO failed to meet even the most urgent needs of Afghans, however, but they have brought the tragedy and horror of war as well. Fighting between the Taliban and other armed groups and NATO forces has forced hundreds of thousands from their

homes. Afghans live in fear of deadly drone strikes on wedding parties and family celebrations, terrifying house raids in the dead of night, and shootings at military checkpoints.

It is not just stability and security which have been taken from Afghans, but their very homeland; their heart and soul. As one man interviewed by al Jazeera said “I’m not interested to go to Europe. Europe is not better for me. Afghanistan is better for me; but they took Afghanistan away from me.”

### **Iraq: Torn to Pieces**

The once modern and secular state of Iraq has been torn to pieces by the US invasion. After a decade of seeing nothing but images of bombed-out buildings, ruined cities, and violence, it is all too easy to forget that Iraq is also home to some of the world’s first libraries, oldest universities, and most important museums. The Iraqi government had prioritized both health care and education, becoming a regional leader in both these fields.

Today, Iraq is a shadow of its former self. Much of the country has been torn apart by US bombings, which have not only destroyed infrastructure, but also caused a massive health crisis due to the use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus munitions. Iraqis have been left with a plague of horrible cancers, birth

MedAct, half of the country’s doctors left between 2003-2007.

Not only have the country’s health and education systems been destroyed by the war, but the entire country is in shambles today. Twenty-eight percent of Iraqis live in poverty, according to the World Bank. Two hundred and fifty shanty towns have cropped up around Baghdad, each housing 2,000 to 17,000 people who live without running water or electricity.

The once peaceful country has been torn apart by sectarian violence, culminating in the rise of ISIS, which now controls much of the country. This violence was fueled not only by the poverty and desperation created by the war as well as the US supporting the division of the country along sectarian lines.

In order to “solve” the situation which they created, the US and other NATO countries, including Canada, began bombing of ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria. But the air strikes have hit not just ISIS targets but innocent civilians as well,



**US Soldiers raid Afghan civilian homes in Afghanistan**



**An Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan, 2015**

defects, and other health problems which will haunt the country for generations to come. This has placed additional strain on Iraq’s health care system, which is suffering both from the destruction of hospitals and the flight of doctors. According to

although the actual number of deaths is unknown since the US for the most part refuses to acknowledge civilian casualties.

Among the refugees, there are far more tales of tragedy to be told than just those from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. From Yemen to Libya to Pakistan, Somalia and beyond, millions of people are fleeing the violence which has wreaked their countries as a result of US and NATO wars and occupations. As one Pakistani man said pointedly in an interview with a British journalist: “In Pakistan we can’t work freely. Because of you, and because

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# REFUGEE CRISIS:

## “You took my country away from me”



By Alison Bodine

Picture a group of refugees gathered in a clearing on the Aegean Coast of Turkey, awaiting the arrival of a small rubber boat to take them to the shores of Greece. People from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, all of whom carry in their eyes and movements the experience of a perilous journey to Turkey and the weight of having left their entire lives behind them. They are anticipating the final stage of their passage to Europe, a four kilometre ride on a boat, or more often than not, a rubber raft filled with far too many people to make the journey safely. 14 people have already drowned in the water this morning, seven of them children.

What is the one question that you would ask them if you were there on the coast? Maybe it would be “Why are you here making this dangerous journey to Europe?” This is the same question posed to a young refugee from Afghanistan recently. He responded, “I am not interested to go to Europe, Europe is not better for me. Afghanistan is better for me, but they took Afghanistan away from me. They do not let me be in Afghanistan.”

**“They took Afghanistan away from me”**

This entire sentence is only six words long, but it has wrapped in it all of the reality that this young man faces. His country, his home, his culture, his community, his history has been taken away from him. And with nothing left he has now fled towards Europe.

The words of this Afghan refugee, whose name was not given in the interview, could be echoed of times by millions of refugees, most of whom have not made it as far as Europe and are scraping by a living in slums and refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey. In the last 14 years of the new era of war and occupation, not only has Afghanistan been taken away from Afghans but Syria has been taken away from Syrians, Iraq has been taken away from Iraqis, Libya has been taken away from Libyans and the list goes on.

The direct result of the U.S. war machine's terrible path through the Middle East and Africa has been a devastating increase in the number of refugees crossing into Europe in the last year. As of December of 2015 an estimated 1 million refugees have entered Europe through the both land and sea crossings, fleeing violence and chaos in their home countries, putting their own lives and the lives of their families in the hands of human smugglers. This is four times as many refugees made the same crossing in 2014. According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) the vast majority of the 1 million refugees, men, women and children of all ages, are from Syria (53%), Afghanistan (18%), and Iraq (6%). These are all countries that have had their basic social fabric torn apart by U.S.-led foreign intervention, war and occupation.

These three countries also have something else in common; there is no end in sight to the wars and occupations that have imposed this unbelievable destruction

and resulted in the deaths of millions of people (it is estimated that 1.5 million people have been killed in the war and occupation of Iraq alone).

In fact, misery, not hope, has only increased for people trying to build a life in the rubble of devastated infrastructure and complete chaos. U.S. drones and fighter jets have continued to drop bombs and rain terror on people in Afghanistan, who have been fighting against foreign U.S./NATO occupation ever since the 2001 invasion of their country. For people in Iraq and Syria their devastation comes from both the direct military intervention of the U.S. government and their allies, and the support that these same imperialist forces have been giving to the extremist terrorist organization IS (also known as ISIS/ISIL). With one hand the over 12 year long U.S./U.K. occupation of Iraq has set the stage for the development of IS by fomenting sectarian divisions and tearing apart the Iraqi government and civil society. With the other hand imperialist forces have also given direct material support to IS both through their support for the so-called “moderate” rebels in Syria, which have benefitted from weapons, training and funding by the U.S. government and their allies, including reactionary gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Although an average of 8,000 people a day landed on the shores of Greece in the month of October (International Organization for Migration – IOM), many more millions of refugees are living in poor developing countries adjacent to the home that they are fleeing. Take for example, Syrian refugees. After nearly five years of a bloody and brutal Western-fomented civil war in Syria, 40% of the



population of Syria is now displaced, with 8 million people internally displaced and 4.5 million people who have fled through the borders of their devastated country; there are 2 million refugees from Syria in Turkey and 1.2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The refugee camps and slums of these countries are at their capacity and more and more people are taking what little savings they may have left and fleeing for their lives and futures once again. As one Syrian father of four put it, conditions in Beirut left him no choice but to find a way to continue on their journey for safety, "What can I say, we have lost everything, and now we are being forced to give up our dignity," he said to a representative of the UNHCR.

The escalation in the number of refugees fleeing for Europe is the direct result of imperialist intervention, wars and occupations in the Middle East and Africa. Humanity can only take so much pain, humiliation and death before it looks for somewhere safe to be.

### Refugee Crisis – Crisis for Humanity

Nine months have passed since the shocking April, 2015 deaths of over 900 people in the Mediterranean Sea, who drowned when the smuggler ship taking them from Libya to Italy capsized. From that point on "refugee crisis in Europe" has been a constant presence in mainstream media as the needless deaths continue, yet there have been no significant improvements in the lives of refugees. As of December 1, 2015, over 3,500 people have drowned crossing the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, fleeing overcrowded refugee camps and countries destroyed by war and occupation. Hundreds more have been killed at the hands of human traffickers. As winter sets



**US soldiers attempt to break open the doors of Afghan homes in Marjah, Helmand Province 2010**

in Europe, the journey has only become more perilous, and with it will come more painful refugee deaths and suffering.

In the face of this continuing crisis for humanity, European leaders have continued to hold meetings and summits that have so far changed very little for the inhuman conditions that the refugees are confronted with when entering Europe. Greece remains largely underfunded



**Thick smoke rises from an airstrike by the US-led coalition in Kobani, Syria 2014**

and unprepared to continuously accept so many refugees. Even with additional funds for constructing centers to receive refugees at three new sites, Greece will only have the capacity to register, let alone feed and house with dignity, 3,500 refugees, far short of the at least 5,000 arriving every day.

Due to new regulations governing how and where certain types of refugees from certain countries can move, a further crisis has developed leaving large groups of people stranded outside along different European borders. This includes the border between Greece and Macedonia, about which a United Nations Children's Fund spokesperson recently stated, "They [refugees] are living in extremely poor conditions, with inadequate shelter. People are sleeping sometimes 30 to 40 inside of a tent to keep warm. A lot of families that we spoke with had been there seven to 10 days, and that includes families with children." In a callous and inhuman response

to this crisis, a new metal fence between Greece and Macedonia is now under construction.

The violence and brutality faced by refugees in Europe has continued largely in the form of police and military forces in different countries along the way deploying tear gas and rubber bullets against refugees. Due to the inaction and inhumanity of European governments,

refugees have also had to rely on a risky passage with human traffickers and the criminal underground for at least part of their journey towards countries like Germany and Sweden which are accepting larger numbers of refugees.

### Refugee = Terrorist?

Not all of the violence that refugees face in Europe comes directly from state police and military forces. Refugees are also targeted by attacks from anti-immigrant and Islamophobic political parties and racist groups in Europe. These far-right organizations have been able to capitalize on a climate of fear, stoked by the global capitalist economic crisis and mass corporate media world-wide. This relationship can be seen very clearly in the wake of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris.

"Official: One of the Paris terrorists came to Europe with Syrian war refugees," was Fox News headline appearing almost immediately after the terrorist attacks in Paris. Multiply this hundreds of times over, and what began as a speculation extracted from a falsified passport found on the scene of one of the terrorist bombing is now a fact. The idea that refugees are responsible for the terrorist attacks in Paris is quickly and firmly

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# Spotlight on Val-d'Or Quebec:

## A case of extreme or everyday injustice for Indigenous women across Canada?



Protest in Val-d'Or, Quebec Oct. 24, 2015

By Tamara Hansen

In spring 2015 Radio-Canada's *Enquête* decided to do a special program on the case of missing Indigenous woman, Sindy Rupérhouse, a 44 year old Algonquin woman missing from the Val-d'Or region of Quebec since the spring of 2014. The idea was to investigate if police had really done all they could to solve this case. *Enquête* went to Val-d'Or in May 2015 and rather than just looking into the case of one missing Indigenous woman, they uncovered a whole new scandal involving abuse of power by the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), Quebec's police force.

### May 2015 : The *Enquête* interviews

The episode, «Abus de la SQ: les femmes brisent le silence.» (Abuse by the SQ [police]: Women break the silence) was finally aired about 6 months after the original interviews on October 22, 2015. It included the May 2015 interview featuring a group of native women in Val-d'Or, making bold accusations against the local police of psychological, physical and sexual abuse. *Enquête* then spent a few months after the interview doing follow up before airing this episode in October 2015.

Nearly 10 women are featured in the May 2015 interviews with their stories of being picked up by the Sûreté du Québec police officers (SQ) for apparent public drunkenness and driven out of town and told to walk back to town "sober up."

First they speak about the fear they felt walking back to town by

themselves in the cold for several lonely dark kilometres. However, the injustice against these women did not end there. These women testify in the interview that at least 6 SQ officers were known to often ask for sexual favours once they had driven these women to the middle of nowhere. Some paying \$200 for oral sex, "\$100 for the service and another \$100 to keep my mouth shut" explains 26-year-old Bianca Moushoun.

These women are living in fear of police, but even so, some courageous women did attempt to file complaints over the years with the police, but either never heard back or later felt intimidated in their community, and did not follow through with charges.



But interestingly as soon as the TV camera's showed up, and they felt someone was listening and that they were being taken seriously, they were ready to speak, stand up for their children and grandchildren who they do not want to face a similar future of abuse at the hands of the police.

### Indigenous women demand justice – the case against the SQ in Quebec

Later in the episode of *Enquête* they interview an SQ official who says that the day after the interview in May 2015, the police opened new investigations as many of the women in the community began to come forward. 8 police officers were put under investigation in a detachment that according to *Enquête* has around 50 officers in total.

At the same time, none of the officers under investigation were suspended from their jobs until after the program was aired in October 2015. Also, the day after *Enquête* aired the episode, an emergency new conference was called by Quebec's Public Security Minister, Lise Thériault, who announced that while they knew about some of the allegations, the *Enquête* episode had revealed more than the Ministry was aware of and they had finally put the 8 officers on leave of absence. Then she cried expressing her sadness and regret. But Ms. Thériault, where was the action and all of those tears before the TV cameras rolled up? These truly looked like crocodile tears.

### Is the Sûreté du Québec the problem?

On October 28, CBC journalist Neil Macdonald published an article titled, "Not just aboriginal women should be scared of Quebec's police." This article makes the case that abuse by the SQ has not only a long history in the province, but also has a long history of being ignored. Macdonald writes, "As it turns out, authorities had been aware





*Parents of Sindy Rupertthouse missing from Val-d'Or.*

of such allegations for months. But, as usual, the provincial police force was being allowed to quietly investigate itself, even though it has a nearly perfect record of declining to lay charges against its own members. It took the reporting of Radio-Canada's premiere investigative program to pour on some disinfectant, and when that happened, things moved fast."

Unfortunately while making some very strong points about the huge shortcomings in idea that police forces can investigate themselves, the CBC article takes a bit of an anti-Quebec tone. Explaining, "But the SQ, which came into being in the late 1930s as bullyboys and strikebreaking thugs in the service of then premier Maurice Duplessis, has a reputation for operating by its own rules. In this case, Val d'Or's detachment decided to punish the town by simply not showing up for work all weekend. The force's director general, evidently unbothered by that, declared there is "no crisis," [...] In English Canada, such overt contempt for civilian authority would be shocking." Obviously this is shocking to anyone that reads it. I assure you it is going to be upsetting and socking for Québécois people too!

The idea that a whole police detachment of around 50 calls in sick for the weekend to punish the people of their community for standing up for themselves is shocking and unbelievable. However, I can think of quite a few headlines I have read recently related to police forces across Canada, and pretty much every time it seems the activities they are involved in or justifying are shocking and unbelievable.

While the accusation that the SQ "has a reputation for operating by its own rules" is completely true, the reason I claim the article seems to take an anti-Quebec tone (or Quebec-is-different-and-more-lawless-than-the-rest-of-Canada-tone) is because they write as if the SQ is anymore corrupt or scandal-plagued than the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) or other police forces across Canada. It is not like we are talking about murdered and missing Indigenous women from Quebec - these

cases are spread out across Canada because the police forces are racist and sexist across the country.

Plus how many current and former female RCMP officers are currently suing Canada's federal police force, the RCMP, for sexual discrimination and harassment? Oh right, as of May 2015 over 350 had joined a class action lawsuit against their current or former employer

according to the National Post. If RCMP officers cannot even treat their female colleagues with dignity and respect, how could we ever trust them with investigating the cases of over a thousand missing and murdered aboriginal women? Or "simpler" investigations of harassment and abuse by police against native women?

#### **How could one camera crew in Val-d'Or expose so much?**

When Enquête went to Val-d'Or to investigate the disappearance of Sindy Rupertthouse they had no idea what they would discover in this community of about 33,000. On October 31, a CBC article explained, "When Enquête began examining the investigation into Sindy's disappearance, they heard about leads that hadn't been followed up and a family who drove all weekend, every weekend in search of their daughter. This past week, the Grand Council of the Cree offered a \$50,000 reward to anyone with information on Rupertthouse's whereabouts. According to Martin Prud'homme, the director-general of the SQ, Rupertthouse's file has now become a murder investigation even if her body has not yet been found." From the research I have undertaken I have not been able to find any information explaining why the police

changed her status from a missing person to a murder investigation in the days following the airing of the Enquête episode.

I think it is also important to recognize that Sindy is not the only murdered or missing Aboriginal woman from the Val-d'Or region. In 2003, a young Indigenous woman, Jeannie Poucachiche was found murdered on the side of the highway on her 20th birthday. Until now, I have not been able to find any articles that explain if her murderer was ever found or brought to justice.

These are just two cases out of the nearly 1,200 murdered or missing Aboriginal women in Canada. So what might happen if solid investigative journalists start making investigations across Canada? What other ongoing crimes would they uncover?

According to Vice News, the episode of Enquête was released "on the heels of an extensive investigation published in La Presse, which revealed that in the last 15 years, 259 indigenous youth had died in violent or mysterious circumstances in the province [of Quebec]. By poring over more than 3,000 coroners' reports, reporters found that Quebec's Aboriginal youth were dying at a rate three to four times higher than in the rest of the province, and that many of the deaths could have been prevented with better access to resources and services." The power of journalists to take on these cases, ask the right questions and speak truth to power is evident. However, this La Presse investigation was woefully underreported in English language media across Canada.

We have to ask, what action is being taken to challenge this criminal situation? Also, journalism is not the answer to solving systemic sexism and racism, this has to be confronted by people across Canada working together and demanding change.

#### **Call for Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women! A Call for Change!**

According to a report made by the RCMP, there have been nearly 1,200 cases of



*First Nations leaders gathered to call for an independent inquiry into police abuse against Indigenous women in Val-d'Or. Oct. 27, 2015*



missing or murdered aboriginal women in Canada since 1980. This report found that while Indigenous women are about 4.3% of Canada's population, they are 16% of victims of female homicide in Canada and 11.3% of the missing women in Canada. For decades family members of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, their friends and allies have been protesting and demanding that their cases be taken seriously, while government and police forces have turned a blind eye.

It was about 10 or 11 years ago when I attended my first Women's Memorial March in Vancouver's downtown east side (DTES). It is held every year on Valentine's Day and focuses especially on missing and murdered Indigenous women. I remember organizers symbolically knocking on the doors of the Vancouver Police Department, explaining to the hundreds of people that had gathered that the family members of missing and murdered DTES women (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) had been coming every year for 15

years demanding the police and government do more to find their loved ones or get justice for their families. That the families and their allies had been banging on those doors asking for help and action from the police while serial killer Robert Pickton was on the loose, killing and disappearing a reported 49 women over a span of almost 30 years. Isn't this also shocking and unbelievable? In a few months, February 14, 2016 Vancouver will have its 26th annual march, and still we will be knocking on those doors. Because while Pickton is in jail, so many other cases are unsolved, and worse yet, women across this country continue to feel too afraid to come forward and seek help.

During the episode of *Enquête*, at the end of the scene with the May 2015 interview, the general director of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Val-d'Or, Édith Cloutier, shared her incisive thoughts on the issue at hand. Cloutier expressed, "On my way to work today I had no idea of the magnitude of what I would learn and of the emotion. If this is

happening here in Val-d'Or, I have to wonder what is happening in Winnipeg, I wonder what is happening in Vancouver, I wonder what is happening in Toronto. At this point, that's enough. That's enough of the abuse. That's enough of the racism."

Her point really speaks for itself and is part of the reason I began researching this article with the question in mind, is what is happening in Val-d'Or Quebec a case of the extreme or the everyday injustice facing Indigenous women across Canada?

Or put in another way, when most non-Indigenous people in Canada hear about the accusations against police in Val-d'Or they find it shocking and unbelievable. But do you think most Indigenous women in Canada will find it so shocking or so unbelievable?

Today across Canada individuals and organizations are coming together to call for a public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women to understand how these women have been systemically ignored, disappeared and murdered with impunity. On October 23, Amnesty International Canada (Francophone) published an article about the situation in Val-d'Or and outlined some good points about what an inquiry should look like. They explain, "As the accounts from Val d'Or illustrate, such an inquiry must be comprehensive, focusing on the all the forms that violence against Indigenous women takes and the discrimination and marginalization that put Indigenous women at risk."

They also point out that for an inquiry to be real and effective it must be:

- Well-resourced
- Independent
- Designed and guided by Indigenous women, family members of the missed and murdered, Indigenous communities and leadership

Of course, an inquiry is not what is going to change the situation for Indigenous women in Canada. That would be wishful thinking. The inquiry is a chance for Aboriginal women and their communities to come together and evaluate the situation they face in Canada and to come up with concrete demands for the government of Canada, the provinces, the territories, the police forces and whoever else they decide needs to be held to account.

This is a chance for Indigenous women and their communities to determine their own future, rather than have it dictated to them by politicians and police who think they know what's best. Over 200 years of the 'Canada knows what's best' strategy has only succeeded in dehumanizing and marginalizing Indigenous women and their communities. This inquiry is a chance for them to clarify their needs and demands so that they can come together as Indigenous women and so that all allies who believe in social justice and equality across Canada can fight alongside them for their demands.



# We must not let ISIS's crimes dictate how we address the refugee crisis – or privacy

Some want to exploit the Paris attacks in order to justify seizures of power to meet their own political ends. We should not let that happen.



*By Chelsea E. Manning\**

Following the horrific attacks by Isis terrorists in Paris and Beirut, we have rapidly seen blatant pandering to xenophobia on a disturbing scale and scope. Leaders throughout the US and Europe have demanded that authorities stifle the flow of migrants seeking asylum, and to increase the size and depths of intelligence and law enforcement powers in the US and Europe.

I don't have all the answers – but I do know that blaming minority groups, refugees and immigrants, investing in gigantic surveillance platforms and calling for expansive legal authority and the creation of a neo-Gestapo and panopticon-style police state aren't one of them.

Even in the weeks and months before the attacks, rightwing parties in Europe – most notably the National Front in France – have attempted to exploit a rising xenophobic sentiment following this year's influx of migrants seeking refuge from Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. Immediately following the attacks such fears have “gone viral” in a way that is disturbing and frightening.

In Canada, the plans to exclude unaccompanied male refugees from resettlement make me fear – in addition to the broader problems of severing young people from their existing support systems – for those queer and transgender folk who are fleeing from being hunted down and murdered indiscriminately.

In the US, federal lawmakers and dozens of state governors have called for the US to stem

the flow of those seeking asylum from Syria, culminating in the quick passage of legislation in the US House making the approval of Syrian refugees into the US administratively difficult, if not impossible – even though approvals of such refugees numbered less than 1,700 in 2014.

The CIA director, James Brennan, described the ongoing controversy over the intelligence communities' mass surveillance and bulk record collection of US citizens and non-citizens as “a lot of hand-wringing over the government's role in the effort to try to uncover these terrorists”.

However, what the intelligence community and law enforcement authorities in the United States and Europe failed to acknowledge is the fact that even before and following the attacks in Paris and Beirut, none of their agencies had lost any of the capabilities that they had previously or that the reformed USA Freedom Act had not even taken effect.

The demands for more power by the powerful were described by Naomi's Klein “Shock Doctrine” principle: people and organizations often exploit crises in order to justify seizures of power to meet their own political and economic ends. The inevitable xenophobic and pro-surveillance responses of the US, EU and Canadian governments were likely, as other analysts have pointed out, part of the strategy calculated by the very organization (Isis) that perpetrated the ghastly atrocities.

The leaders of Isis are canny strategists with a solid understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the west. They expect politicians and military leaders in the US and Europe – particularly in the case of France and the

United Kingdom – to overreact in response to successful attacks in the US and Europe and territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, and they use those responses to recruit Europeans and Americans in their call to arms.

Like many other attacks, the attacks in Paris were tragic, horrific and coldly calculated. They may or may not have been preventable – it's simply far too soon to know, assuming that we ever will. However, stoking the fears about a shadowy wave of terrorists coming from everywhere that there is warfare and strife is a disturbing, alienating and disproportionate response.

The people of France were the ones who delivered the Statue of Liberty to the US nearly a century and a half ago. Beside the statue for many years was a massive immigration station on Ellis Island. Describing the site of the statue as it was erected, the American poet Emma Lazarus wrote that the statue silently demands:

*Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

It is a poem that defines America – and we and the EU would do well to remember it, especially in such turbulent times.

*This article was originally published by the Guardian Newspaper on November 25, 2015.*

*\*Chelsea Manning is a young U.S. soldier currently serving a 35-year prison sentence in the U.S. for blowing the whistle on war crimes committed by the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

# Continent-wide Right Wing Destabilization in Latin America:



## it's not just Venezuela...

By Francisco Dominguez\*

The ongoing destabilization in Venezuela led by the US has recently intensified and is spreading it to other countries in the region. The aim is the same: to unleash violence to foster a context of un-governability, political crisis and economic chaos so as to oust democratically elected governments – just as happened in Chile against President Allende in 1973 when General Pinochet came to power in a US-backed coup.

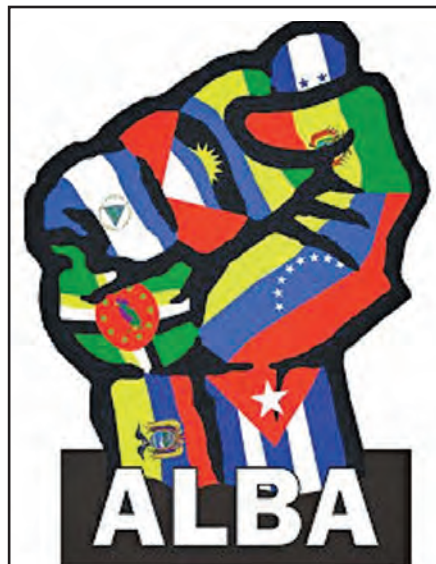
Their nature has been aptly described by President Rafael Correa as “Conservative Restoration”. These forces enjoy robust and sustained financial support from national and international conservative currents, primarily from US official bodies such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAID. There are on-going destabilization plans against Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Argentina, Nicaragua Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba and the Caribbean – we will concentrate on a few of them.

Venezuela, since the passing away of Hugo Chavez, has been the target of what progressive movements there have termed an ‘economic war’ that through induced scarcity of food and other basic staple items, large-scale contraband, and currency speculation, has dislocated its economy.

Exactly as in Allende’s Chile it aims to make the poor bear the brunt of the scarcity in order to erode the government’s electoral base with the objective in this case to win the coming parliamentary elections of 6th December 2015 and ultimately overthrow the country’s constitutional Government.

Right-wing destabilization has also involved terrorist sabotage of the electric-

ity system and criminal paramilitary activity. All indications are that the Right will not recognize the results if they are unfavorable and may embark on a wave of violence. The US, NED and US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) military headquarters support and finance the Right’s efforts. US government’s spokespersons, including Barack Obama and John Kerry have falsely charged the Maduro government with being dictatorial, with Obama issuing an Executive Decree declaring “Venezuela a threat to [US] national security”. US SOUTHCOM Chief, General John Kelly, has now contributed by ‘volunteering’ an interview to CNN Spanish news channel to announce that Venezuela is about to “implode”, which



*Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) is an intergovernmental organization based on the idea of political, economic, and social alliance in defence of independence, self-determination and the identity of peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.*

may ne-  
military

cessitate US  
action.

In Bra- zil, the Workers  
P a r t y won a decisive victory  
in 2014 with the re-election  
of Dilma Rousseff, despite the  
severe world recession that hit the  
country very hard. Their electoral defeat  
has led Brazil’s Right to try and make  
the country ungovernable by both seek-  
ing to impeach Dilma, and also bar Lula  
from standing as presidential candidate in  
2018. At street demonstrations, sections  
of Brazil’s Right have even made open  
calls for a military dictatorship.

Despite a recent parliamentary commis-  
sion having cleared Dilma and Lula from  
any wrongdoing in the Petrobras (Brazil-  
ian oil company) financial scandal, the  
PSDB – the main right wing party – and  
its allies continue their efforts to impeach  
Dilma. As elsewhere in the continent the  
Right are trying to get unconstitutionally  
what they cannot obtain by votes. Their  
frantic efforts only reveal their fear of the  
2018 election.

Simultaneously, Jose Serra, PSDB 2010  
presidential candidate, has submitted leg-  
islation to privatize Petrobras, the coun-  
try’s state oil company. This is the real  
objective behind the Right’s campaign to  
oust the democratically elected and legiti-  
mate government of Dilma Rousseff. Bra-  
zil has the second largest oil reserves in  
South America and, therefore, Petrobras’  
privatization is of strategic importance to  
the United States. The obstacle to its full  
privatization is the Workers Party gov-  
ernment.

*continued on page 12*



# DESESTABILIZACIÓN DE LA DERECHA LATINOAMERICANA A LO LARGO DEL CONTINENTE: NO ES TAN SOLO VENEZUELA

**\* EN ESPAÑOL \***

Por Francisco Dominguez\*

La desestabilización en curso en contra de Venezuela liderada por los EE.UU. se ha intensificado recientemente y propagado a otros países de la región.

El objetivo es el mismo: dar rienda suelta a la violencia, para así fomentar un contexto de ingobernabilidad, crisis política y caos económico que con lleve a derrocar a gobiernos elegidos democráticamente - al igual que como sucedió en Chile contra el presidente Allende en 1973 cuando el general Pinochet llegó al poder a través de un golpe de estado respaldado por los Estados Unidos.

Su naturaleza ha sido acertadamente descrita como “restauración conservadora” por el presidente de Ecuador Rafael Correa. Estas fuerzas además cuentan con un solido apoyo financiero proveniente de las corrientes conservadoras nacionales e internacionales, principalmente de organismos oficiales de Estados Unidos como la “National Endowment for Democracy” (NED) y USAID.

Actualmente se encuentran en curso planes de desestabilización en contra de Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Argentina, Nicaragua, Brasil, Bolivia, Cuba y el Caribe - nos enfocaremos en algunos ellos.

Venezuela, desde el fallecimiento de Hugo Chávez, ha sido blanco de lo que los movimientos progresistas denominan una “guerra económica”, la cual ha distorsionado su economía por medio de una escasez inducida de alimentos y otros artículos básicos de primera necesidad, el contrabando a gran escala, y la especulación monetaria. Del mismo modo que en el Chile de Allende, el objetivo que tiene es afectar con la escasez a los pobres y así erosionar la base electoral del gobierno, con el fin, en este caso, de ganar las próximas elecciones parlamentarias a realizarse el 6 de diciembre del 2015, y sucesivamente derrocar al Gobierno constitucional del país. La



desestabilización derechista también ha participado en el sabotaje terrorista del sistema eléctrico y en actividades paramilitares criminales. Todo parece apuntar a que la Derecha no reconocerá los resultados si son desfavorables para ellos y podrían embarcarse en una onda de violencia.

Los EE.UU., la NED y el Comando Sur de los Estados Unidos (SOUTHCOM) apoyan y financian los esfuerzos de la derecha. Voceros del gobierno de Estados Unidos, entre ellos Barack Obama y John Kerry han acusado falsamente al gobierno de Maduro de dictatorial, con Obama emitiendo un Decreto que declara a “Venezuela una amenaza para la seguridad nacional [ de Estados Unidos] “. El jefe de EE.UU, SOUTHCOM, el general John Kelly, ha participado “voluntariamente” en una entrevista en el canal de noticias CNN Español anunciando que Venezuela está a punto de “implosionar” por lo cual podría necesitar de una acción militar de EE.UU.

En Brasil, el Partido de los Trabajadores obtuvo una victoria decisiva en el 2014 con la reelección de Dilma Rousseff como presidenta, quien fue reelecta a pesar de la severa recesión mundial que afectó duramente al país. La Derecha Brasileira tras su derrota electoral ha intentado hacer el país ingobernable tanto para destituir a Dilma, y comp para obstaculizar la presentación de Lula como candidato para las elecciones 2018. En las protestas callejeras algunos sectores de la derecha Brasileira han incluso solicitado

una dictadura militar.

A pesar de que recientemente la comisión parlamentaria exculpo a Dilma y Lula

de cualquier fechoría en el escándalo financiero Petrobras (petrolera brasileña), el PSDB - principal partido de la derecha - y sus aliados continúan sus esfuerzos para destituir a Dilma. Al igual que en otras partes del continente la derecha está tratando de conseguir inconstitucionalmente lo que no ha podido obtener en las votaciones. Sus frenéticos esfuerzos sólo revelan su miedo a la elección 2018.

Contemporáneamente, José Serra, candidato a la presidencia por el PSDB 2010, ha presentado un proyecto de ley para privatizar Petrobras, la petrolera estatal del país. Siendo este el verdadero objetivo tras la campaña de la derecha para derrocar al gobierno democráticamente electo y legítimo de Dilma Rousseff. Brasil posee la segunda reserva más grande de petróleo en América del Sur, por lo tanto, la privatización de Petrobras es de estratégica importancia para los Estados Unidos. El obstáculo para su completa privatización es el gobierno del Partido de los Trabajadores.

Mientras tanto en Ecuador el 13 de agosto de 2015, se llevó a cabo una ola de violencia callejera, la cual incluyo el bloqueo de carreteras y autopistas, esta fue organizada por la oposición oligárquica, destinada a derrocar el gobierno democráticamente

*continúa en la página 13*

In Ecuador meanwhile, a wave of street violence, including the blocking of roads and motorways, organized by the oligarchic opposition took place on 13th August 2015, aimed at ousting the democratically elected government of Rafael Correa. Ecuador's Right has already attempted – and almost succeeded – in violently overthrowing Correa in a coup in September 2010.

This time, what has prompted the current wave of violent protests is a government proposed Heritage Tax that would affect 1% of the country's richest income earners. The government has now temporarily withdrawn and challenged the Right to a national debate on the proposal. The Right, bereft of arguments, just blindly opposes it and is bent on illegally ousting the government. As is widely known, the government of Correa faces also the relentless pressure from oil giant Chevron in a legal challenge that would bankrupt the country if it succeeded. Thus, as with Venezuela and the rest of the region Ecuador's progressive government is subjected to domestic and foreign destabilization. Ecuador's opposition is also vigorously funded and supported by US agencies.

The destabilizers can also count on the active support of much of the international media and the majority of right-wing controlled media domestically, with many outlets relentlessly publishing negative reports, misrepresentation, distortion and false positives with the clear objective of isolating and minimizing solidarity support for progressive governments.

In a coordinated response, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) alliance of nations, at a Meeting of its Political Council, denounced "the renewed plans implemented by global transnational capitalism and imperialism, which through non-conventional war strategies, intend to destabilize and overthrow the democratically elected progressive governments of the region."

It is clear that the US and its regional allies on the extreme right will intensify their efforts in the coming period. We need to redouble our solidarity work in the run up to December's National Assembly elections in Venezuela and beyond.

*\*Francisco Dominguez is the secretary of Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VCS) UK*  
<http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/>

## VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN FACTSHEET:

# The Facts About Venezuelan Elections



By Susan Grey & Tim Young

Over the last seventeen years Venezuela has made exceptional progress in registering voters, increasing electoral turnout and making its voting arrangements both efficient and transparent. Elections for the National Assembly will be held in Venezuela on 6 December 2015. This factsheet provides both an overview and the key details of Venezuela's modern, democratic electoral system under which those elections will be run.

1. Venezuela's National Electoral Council is widely trusted: The National Electoral Council (CNE) is a non-partisan body responsible for all aspects of the electoral process, including establishing the date of elections, registering voters, facilitating and monitoring campaigns, organising the voting equipment and auditing the vote together with party representatives. Poll workers are drawn by lottery from the electoral register. For these reasons, the CNE is widely trusted, even by the opposition MUD coalition who asked it to oversee their own presidential primaries.

2. Regular elections are held at all levels of government including:

**Presidential elections:** The President of Venezuela is elected for a six-year term by direct election plurality voting, and is eligible for re-election.

**Parliamentary elections:** The National Assembly is the legislative branch of the Venezuelan government. It is made up of a variable number of members, depending on population numbers, and determined by the CNE. In 2016 there will be 167 delegates, with 113 elected under first past the post from 87 voting districts, 51 by closed party list

proportional representation based on the 23 states and Capital District, and 3 to represent indigenous peoples from each of three regions. Elections take place every 5 years.

**Regional elections:** Governors and legislators are directly elected for terms of 5 years in each of Venezuela's 23 states.

**Municipal elections:** The 335 municipalities are subdivisions of the 23 states. In municipal elections, Venezuelans elect municipal mayors and councillors, metropolitan mayors for Caracas and Alto Pure, representatives of indigenous peoples and members of district councils.

Rigorous registration systems prevent identity fraud:

Under the 1999 constitution, all Venezuelans over the age of 18 have the right to vote. Additionally, long-term resident non-nationals over 18 (resident over 10 years) have the right to vote in regional and local elections. Over 19 million of the 28 million population are currently registered to vote, including nearly 100,000 people resident outside Venezuela. Voters register their fingerprints and identity card details onto the Electoral Register, and these are verified during the voting process.

Participation in Venezuelan democracy expanded considerably under the Chavez-led government. In 1998 only 11million Venezuelans were registered to vote, with many of the poorer citizens left disenfranchised. Access to polling stations has also increased, with numbers increasing from 8,000 to 14,000 and better provision made for

*Continued on page 13*



*continued from page 12*

disabled voters.

4. Votes cannot be rigged and are routinely audited:

Each polling station has a number of standalone DRE voting machines. Each citizen is identified by his or her fingerprints and the touch-screen voting machine is only activated if the fingerprint matches the voter's ID on the database. The machine provides a printed receipt that is checked by the voter before being placed in the ballot box. Finally, the voter's finger is marked with indelible ink to ensure he or she cannot vote twice.

This rigorous system prevents fraudulent behaviour, such as double voting or identity theft, and provides an audit trail to check the results. Since there are

two records of every vote it is virtually impossible to stuff or destroy ballot boxes without producing a mismatch between manual and electronic counts.

After the poll closes, the total number of votes cast is checked for consistency with the paper record, the machines are connected to the network to count the votes for each candidate, and a number of machines are selected at random for a 54% audit of both paper and electronic results at each polling station. Finally an audit report is produced and signed by staff and observers, officially sealed and handed to the military for delivery to the CNE, with copies to the two candidates with the highest number of votes.

5. Venezuela's elections are recognised as fair by International Observers: Venezuelan elections in recent years

have been monitored by as many as 150 international observers, with observers from different elections being drawn from organisations such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Carter Centre, the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts (CEELA) and the Inter American Union of Electoral Councils (UNIORE).

Venezuela's rigorous systems of registration, voting and auditing elections have been praised by many observers, with Nobel prize-winner former President Jimmy Carter describing it as "the best in the world". The Director of The Carter Centre noted that the post election audits had never had any significant discrepancy between the paper receipts and the electronic votes.

<http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/>



*Viene de la página 11*

electo de Rafael Correa. La Derecha Ecuatoriana ha ya intentado - y casi logrado - derrocar al presidente Correa en forma violenta mediante un golpe de Estado en septiembre del 2010.

Lo que ha llevado esta vez a la actual ola de protestas violentas, es el impuesto al Patrimonio propuesto por el gobierno, el cual afectaría al 1% de los perceptores de ingresos más ricos del país.

El gobierno ha retirado momentáneamente la propuesta y ha desafiado a la Derecha a un debate nacional sobre esta. La Derecha, carente de argumentos, se opone ciegamente a ella y está empeñada en derrocar ilegalmente al gobierno. Como es bien sabido, el gobierno de Correa además enfrenta la presión implacable de la gigante petrolera Chevron en un desafío legal que podría dejar al país en

bancarrota si tiene éxito. Tanto Venezuela como y el resto de la región el gobierno progresista de Ecuador a sido sujeto de desestabilización interna y externa. La oposición de Ecuador está siendo también vigorosamente financiada y apoyada por agencias estadounidenses.

Los desestabilizadores también cuentan con el apoyo activo de gran parte de los medios internacionales de comunicación y la mayoría de los medios de comunicación a nivel interno (domésticos) son controlados por la derecha, quienes publican incansablemente informes negativos, tergiversan, distorsionan las noticias y entregan falsos positivos con el claro objetivo de aislar y minimizar apoyo solidario a los gobiernos progresistas.

En una respuesta coordinada, la Alianza Bolivariana para América Latina y el Caribe (ALBA) en una reunión de

su Consejo Político, denunció "los planes renovados implementados por el capitalismo transnacional global y el imperialismo, los cuales por medio de estrategias de guerra no convencionales, intentan desestabilizar y derrocar a los gobiernos progresistas democráticamente electos en la región".

Está claro que los EE.UU. y sus aliados regionales en la extrema derecha desean intensificar sus esfuerzos en el próximo período. Por esto debemos redoblar nuestro trabajo de solidaridad en el período previo a las elecciones de la Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela este diciembre y también en el futuro.

*\*Francisco Domínguez es el secretario de la Campaña de Solidaridad con Venezuela en Gran Bretaña*

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# BLAIR'S LATE & UNACCEPTABLE APOLOGIES ON IRAQ



By Manuel Yepe\*

In a recent interview with CNN, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair apologized timidly for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"I apologize for the fact that the intelligence we received was wrong," Blair said, somehow with a straight face. "I can also apologize, by the way, for some of the mistakes in planning and certainly our mistake in our understanding of what would happen once you remove the regime... But I find it hard to apologize for removing Saddam."

He admitted lamely that there are "elements of truth" to the statement that the rise of ISIS can be directly attributed to the invasion of Iraq.

On the subject, analyst Melissa Dykes wrote for *The Daily Sheeple*: "Considering Blair tried to play off the 2003 invasion as a response to a 'crisis of the moment'—and not something he had personally visited President George W. Bush at his Crawford ranch to discuss a year before the invasion as a leaked memo later proved—is pathetic."

The *Telegraph* is reporting that family members of soldiers who died in Iraq have responded to Blair's "apology" with revulsion: "This man certainly got it wrong," says the London publication. "179 British service personnel dead, 3,500 wounded. Not to mention the hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children that lost their lives. The guy has got to hold his hands up and say I got it wrong and I apologize."

Figures differ depending on source, but a 2013 study concluded that the Iraq death toll was at least 500,000 people. Other sources say it is was well over a million dead. "Iraq remains one giant unmarked

grave of unknown size," the website *Iraq Body Count* has declared.

It has also been suggested that Blair only apologized at all because the Chilcot Inquiry report is due out soon. The Inquiry—British public inquiry into the UK's role in the Iraq war—began in 2009 by a Committee presided over by Sir John Chilcot.

The delay in submitting the Chilcot report has become a national scandal. Probably it will not be ready before 2017, or that is, with no less than seven years delay and a decade after the last British troops left Iraq. A lot of people, including family members of soldiers who died in Iraq, see that war as unnecessary and futile.

Journalist Peter Osborne, of London's *Daily Mail*, has been working with a BBC team in developing their own recount of the war in Iraq. Their results are based on testimony and evidence obtained by Chilcot, as well as their own interviews with persons involved.

These are the four key questions in Osborne's survey and a brief summary of the conclusions that have been derived from the responses obtained:

1. Was the information presented by the Blair government on the "weapons of mass destruction" held by Saddam that drove the UK into the war against Iraq in 2003 an accurate reflection of the underlying facts?

A: There is devastating evidence that the Prime Minister misled Parliament and the British people about the threat of Saddam.

2. Did the invasion of Iraq increase the threat from al-Qaeda to the UK?

A: The evidence that the threat from al-Qaeda to the UK as a result of the Iraq war is clear and unequivocally proven.

3. Is there hard evidence that Tony Blair

entered into a secret deal with the US president George Bush that the UK would support US military action come what may?

A: The evidence suggests that Blair entered some kind of arrangement with Bush, 11 months before the invasion, when both were in Bush's ranch in Texas in April 2002.

4. Was the war against Iraq legal?

A: All lawyers of the Foreign Office at the time agreed that the war was illegal if it did not have a second approving resolution from the UN Security Council.

Clearly, by his public statements, Blair felt committed to going to war at all costs, and compelled to disarm Iraq by force, if Saddam could not be disarmed by peaceful means.

Osborne believes that the delay in the publication of the results of the official public inquiry is unforgivable, especially now that Britain is under pressure to send troops to Syria.

*\*Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

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*A CubaNews translation. Edited by  
Walter Lippmann.  
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Por Manuel Yepe\*

En reciente entrevista con CNN, el ex primer ministro británico Tony Blair se disculpó tímidamente por su responsabilidad en el lanzamiento de la invasión a Irak en 2003.

“Pido disculpas por este hecho, que se basó en una errónea información de inteligencia”, dijo Blair con semblante contrito. “Puedo

ciertamente pedir también excusas por algunos de los errores en la planificación y por nuestro erróneo entender de lo que sucedería una vez que elimináramos el régimen... Pero me resulta difícil pedir disculpas por la eliminación de Saddam.”

Sólo tenuemente admitió que existen “elementos de verdad” en la aserción de que el ascenso de Estado Islámico puede atribuirse directamente a aquella invasión de Irak.

Al respecto, la escritora Melissa Dykes escribe en The Daily Sheeple que “Es patético considerar que Blair trató de presentar la invasión de 2003 como respuesta a una crisis circunstancial, siendo en verdad resultante de algo que él personalmente discutió con el Presidente George W. Bush en su rancho de Crawford un año antes de la invasión, como lo atestigua un memorándum filtrado con posterioridad”. El Telegraph, indica que los familiares de los soldados que murieron en Irak han recibido con repugnancia la “disculpa” de Blair. “Este señor debía confesar que se equivocó y pedir disculpas con las manos en alto”, dice el diario londinense al recordar que “en esta guerra murieron 179 combatientes británicos y 3.500 fueron heridos, sin mencionar los cientos de miles de iraquíes inocentes, mujeres y niños que perdieron la vida”.

Estas cifras difieren según la fuente. Un estudio divulgado en 2013 situaba la cifra de muertos de Irak sobre el medio millón

de personas. Otras fuentes dicen que es más de un millón murieron. “Irak sigue siendo una gigantesca tumba sin nombre y de tamaño desconocido,” dice el sitio web Iraq Body Count.

Se ha sugerido que Blair ha pedido disculpas para anticiparse a la divulgación de los resultados de la investigación pública sobre el papel del Reino Unido en la guerra de Irak en la que se trabaja desde 2009 una comisión presidida por

## EXCUSAS TARDÍAS E INACEPTABLES DE BLAIR SOBRE IRAK



Sir John Chilcot.

La tardanza en la presentación el Informe Chilcot se ha convertido en un escándalo nacional. Probablemente no estará listo antes de 2017, o sea, con no menos de siete años de retraso y una década después que las últimas tropas británicas salieran de Irak.

La demora en la investigación se ha convertido en un escándalo nacional. Mucha gente, incluyendo los familiares de los caídos, ve aquella guerra contra Irak como innecesaria y vana.

El periodista Peter Osborne, del Daily Mail de Londres ha estado trabajando con un equipo de la BBC en la elaboración de su propio recuento sobre la guerra de Irak. Sus resultados se basan en los testimonios y pruebas obtenidos por Chilcot, así como en sus propias entrevistas con actores involucrados.

He aquí las cuatro preguntas centrales en la encuesta de Osborne y una breve síntesis de las conclusiones que han derivado de las respuestas obtenidas:

1.- ¿La información presentada por el gobierno sobre las “armas de destrucción masiva” en poder de Saddam que llevó a Tony Blair a hacer que Gran Bretaña entrara en la guerra contra Irak en 2003 fue reflejo de hechos reales?

R.- Hay pruebas devastadoras de que el Primer Ministro engañó a la cámara de Diputados y al pueblo británico sobre la amenaza de Saddam. 2.- ¿La invasión de Irak incrementó la amenaza de Al Qaeda a Gran Bretaña? R.- La evidencia de que la amenaza de Al Qaeda aumentó como

consecuencia de la guerra de Irak es clara e inequívocamente probada. 3.- ¿Tony Blair entró en un acuerdo secreto con el presidente estadounidense George Bush comprometiendo el apoyo de Gran Bretaña a la invasión de Estados Unidos, a cualquier costo?

R.- La evidencia sugiere que Blair entró en algún tipo de arreglo con Bush 11 meses antes de la invasión, cuando ambos se encontraron en el rancho de éste último de Texas en abril de 2002.

4.- ¿La guerra contra Irak era legal?

R.- Todos los juristas de la Oficina de Relaciones Exteriores en aquel tiempo, coincidieron en que la guerra era ilegal si no contaba con una segunda resolución aprobatoria del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU. Es evidente, por sus con declaraciones públicas, que Blair se sentía comprometido a ir a la guerra a toda costa, y que se consideraba obligado a desarmar a Irak por la fuerza si Saddam no podía ser desarmado por medios pacíficos.

Osborne señala que el retraso en la publicación de la investigación oficial es imperdonable, sobre todo ahora que Gran Bretaña está bajo presión para enviar tropas a Siria.

*\*Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

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# CAPITALISM IS THE PROBLEM: SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!

*By Thomas Davies*

The headline on the fake news site The Onion read, "Obama Increases Sense Of Urgency By Riding Last White Rhino On Earth Through Climate Talk". While it was obviously satirical, it fit perfectly with the surreal circus atmosphere of the ongoing 2015 UN Paris Climate Conference known as COP21. COP stands for "Conference of Parties" and "21" stands for the 21 years these "world leaders" have gathered to discuss the increasingly drastic environmental crisis overtaking the planet. The 25,000 official delegates to the conference, including 150 heads of state, might as well been all riding extinct or almost extinct animals, because since the first COP meeting took place in Berlin in 1995, they have accomplished absolutely nothing beyond well orchestrated photo opportunities and a worsening climate crisis.

## **The Movement Grows Despite Them**

Following the Paris terrorist attacks the French government originally promised that the massive peaceful mobilizations which were to occur outside of the COP21 meeting would be allowed to carry on as planned. A few days later they banned all marches altogether. Those in Paris who decided to affirm their right to freedom of assembly and march for climate justice were met by riot police, teargas and arrests.

Undeterred, the growing global climate movement continued its work. The coordinated Global Climate March broke records as the largest coordinated climate mobilization in history with over 785,000 people marching at 2,300 events in 175 countries on November 28 and 29. This

came soon after the largest single climate march in history which happened in New York on September 21 of last year, with over 400,000 people joining the "Peoples Climate March" and over 270,000 more participating in 2000 coordinated actions in 166 countries across the globe.

So there's some obvious differences between those in the expensive suites discussing climate change inside the COP21 summit, and those outside acting to save the planet. There is a broad scientific consensus that we must limit the average global temperature rise to under 1.5°C - 2°C or face irreversible and catastrophic consequences which would literally jeopardize all life on this planet. Climate Action Tracker's estimation, based on exhaustive research, concludes that the current level of ambition articulated by COP21 leaders would give us a 66 percent chance of staying under 3°C. Not good enough!

So there is an urgency and a necessity to look beyond these meetings for solutions.

## **Latin America – The Difference Engine**

Luckily there are some world leaders who also use the opportunity of the attention focused on the summits to make important declarations and real proposals. One of the few is Bolivian President Evo Morales, who came to Paris with a simple message, "If we continue on the path laid by capitalism, we are doomed to disappear...We ask for an end to the irreversible destruction of the planet and remember that capitalism has developed an overwhelming and destructive life force, caused by the production of consumer goods that today destroy nature, with wars of conquest."

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa reaffirmed the call for a universal declaration of the rights of nature, something that Ecuador has already recognized, and for the creation of an International Court of Environmental Justice. The court would punish environmental crimes and oblige the payment of environmental debts.

These are not just hollow denunciations, Latin-American countries such as Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador are leading the way by showing that it is possible to create social just and environmentally sustainable societies.

Bolivia's official national submission to COP21 contains very straightforward proposals which if implemented could actually save the planet!

1. Adoption of a new model of civilization in the world without consumerism, war-mongering, and mercantilism, a world without capitalism; build and consolidate a world order of Living Well that defends and promotes the integral rights of our peoples, undertaking the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.

2. Construction of a climate system based on responsibility to Mother Earth, the culture of life and the full realization of humanity in their holistic development, humanizing the economy, surpassing the simplistic approach to decarbonization of the economy.

3. Protection of the Rights of Mother Earth in an articulated and complementary manner to the rights of peoples to their development.

4. Defense of universal common goods such





**Global Climate March in Vancouver. Nov. 29, 2015**

as the seas and oceans, water, atmospheric space, as well as the technological monopoly, promoting people's access to the common heritage.

5. Elimination of patents on technologies and recognition of the human right to science and technology of life.
6. Effective implementation by governments of the human right to water.
7. Establishment of the International Court of Justice Climate and Mother Earth to enable countries to fulfill their international commitments to climate change in a context of respect for the rights of peoples and of Mother Earth.
8. Allocate the resources of the military machinery of the imperial powers and the

enemies of nature.

### **Concertizing the Struggle**

In fact, progressive Latin American governments and social movements were so fed up with the inaction of the COP meetings, they created their own grassroots gathering to begin organizing an alternative. Meeting in Havana on December 14 of last year, the 13th summit of ALBA ( Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of Our America – a regional cooperation organization created as a successful alternative to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) the United States was trying to impose on Latin America) endorsed a Bolivian proposal to host an international assembly of social movements in 2015 to discuss and adopt a

war-mongers to finance the activities of the peoples against climate change.

9. Eradication of commodification of nature and carbon markets promoting business climate millionaires, which do not solve the problem of the climate crisis.
10. Decolonize natural resources environmental colonial biased views that see the peoples of the South as forest rangers of Northern countries and communities as

united strategy for fighting climate change.

The decision by ALBA coincided with release of the final agreement adopted by COP20 climate talks at Lima, Peru which was universally condemned for its continuation of the failure to take meaningful actions to prevent catastrophic climate warming.

The World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life

This meeting took place in Tiguipiya, Bolivia from October 10 to 12 and brought together thousands of organizers and actual world leaders from around the globe to discuss and implement real solutions to the climate crisis. The Final Declaration includes many important points and concrete proposals.

Fire This Time is also printing the introduction to the Declaration as yet another example of the kind of vision necessary to save the planet and humanity. This is the approach the COP summits have failed to achieve over the last 2 decades. Those who tell us that it is not pragmatic or possible to create a sustainable world are the same ones who are able to create the most sophisticated weapons of war and coordinate their continued use to kill millions around the world. They can drill sideways hundreds of meters underground for oil. They can split atoms. Yet it's not possible not live sustainably?

Latin-American countries are proving them wrong time and time again, and the more attention the global climate movement pays to them the closer we will be to saving the planet and humanity.

## **VANCOUVER STRONGLY TAKES TO THE STREETS - JOINS THE INTERNATIONAL CALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE!**

*By Alison Bodine*

On Sunday, November 29 loud chants of "Get Up! Stand Up! Climate Justice Now!" echoed off the buildings of downtown Vancouver. Despite the frosty weather, over 6,000 people gathered as part of the Global Climate March coordinated actions taking place around the world that same day. Looking out at the diverse crowd of young and old protesters, colourful hand-made signs reading "System Change Not Climate Change," or "Pipelines, No Fracking Way!" mixed with gigantic banners that spanned the entire street declaring "We can build a better future!"

The Global Climate March in Vancouver was organized and endorsed by over 70 groups including Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice (FTT) and Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) as well as many other Indigenous, environmental, social justice, antiwar, faith, student organizations numbers of labour unions. The program of action for the day began at 1pm with a dynamic program of speakers and local musicians MC'd by Shirley Samples of We Love This Coast and Kaschelle Thiessen of 350Vancouver.

By the time the march left for the streets, the plaza at the Vancouver Art Gallery had filled with people from all backgrounds, high school and college students, families, immigrants and workers. Together, they marched united for climate justice, chanting on

a wide range of issues related to the destruction of the environment, from the development of liquefied natural gas industry, the expansion of fracking projects, Canada's pipelines, tar sands and oil tankers, to legislated environmental protections and respect for Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

The action taking place in Vancouver was multiplied the world-wide, with over 2300 actions organized in 175 countries for the Global Climate March. The actions were coordinated to take place one day before the COP21 climate summit began in Paris, France. This summit, officially titled the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to discuss climate change and the setting of carbon emissions targets.

Together the November 29 demonstrations brought the loud demand for climate justice to all the so-called "world leaders" gathered at the COP21 climate summit, which is in essence a meeting to save mother earth led by those governments that are in fact responsible for her destruction. An estimated 785,000 people around the world protested and marched on the streets to raise the people's voice against climate change and environmental degradation.

From the streets of Vancouver and Kyoto to São Paulo and Beirut, the Global Climate March was an important expression of unity in the face of the climate crisis facing humanity today. In order to win the fight to save mother earth we need more united actions in the streets!



## INTRODUCTION TO THE DECLARATION OF THE WORLD PEOPLES' CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE & THE DEFENSE OF LIFE TIQUIPAYA – BOLIVIA

The peoples of the world gathered in Tiquipaya, Bolivia from 10 to 12 October 2015, we worked on a agreed proposal to be presented to the international community and governments around the world to preserve the life and combat climate change; as an urgent response to a failed capitalist system and civilization model that are the structural causes of the climate crisis in the world.

This Declaration brings together our thinking and feeling, and our proposal for international negotiations of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations on climate change, environment, sustainable development and other relevant scenarios, as well as the permanent agenda of the peoples for the defense of the life.

The transition to civilization model of Living Well The world is being battered by multiple global crisis that manifests itself in a climate, financial, food, energy, institutional, cultural, ethical and spiritual crisis and a state of permanent war. This tells us that we are living an integral crisis of capitalism and a society model. To survive, humanity must break free of capitalism that is leading humanity towards a horizon of destruction that sentence of death nature and life itself. The western civilization model articulated the capitalist worldwide system were expanded by the imperial powers and Northern countries with crimes against humanity, looting and subjugation of our peoples; wars have been the instrument of subjugation and domination that imperialism has used to impose their political and economic will. Wars have also been used by transnational corporations to wrest the sea from peoples attempting against its right to the sea.

Colonialism of the Northern powers exercised oppression and domination over humanity, causing peoples to lose their identity and recreate foreign models, where nature and the human being himself are capital to be exploited. The colonial order

has intended to impose an economic, social, cultural and political to all Southern countries homogenization. Currently the imperial powers permanently still violate the sovereignty of the States, using bombings, invasions, civil wars, espionage and destabilization of democratic governments to subdue the governments and peoples of the world. It is not just the arms and war model which destroys life on the planet, they are also the economic models and the international financial architecture which strangle the economies of the countries trying to be sovereign and dignified. Therefore, the restructuring of the governance of the multilateral financial institutions should be a transparent, consultative and inclusive process to move forward with a process of reforming the international financial and monetary system.

We have to put a new civilization model that values the culture of life and culture of peace that is the Living Well. The world needs to move towards the holistic vision of Living Well, deepening the complementarity between the peoples rights and the Mother Earth rights, which involves building a balanced relationship between human beings and nature to restore harmony with Mother Earth. Living Well in harmony with Mother Earth is the new model of civilization to preserve community life, where Mother Earth is a living being sacred, and not an object for the exploitation of human beings. Today, the peoples of the world, we rise up against a capitalist system that promotes environmental business, the commercialization and privatization of environmental functions of nature, which are and must remain a common good of the peoples.

We rise up against capitalism that is the structural causes of climate change and intends to submit the life cycles of Mother Earth to the market rules under the domination of capitalist technology. Science, knowledge and technology must be

instruments that foster peace, non- violence, harmony, full life and living well; they should be aimed at eradicating the imbalance of the human being with himself and with Mother Earth. The struggle of the peoples in this century is the struggle for the defense of common goods and the common heritage. In capitalism the common goods are privatized, are plundered and exploited for the benefit of a few individuals, businesses and corporations. The overall harmony of Mother Earth is the basis of our common heritage and the atmospheric space has become the most important common heritage of society.

Atmospheric colonization with emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, because of excessive and irrational industrialization of developed countries, has broken the balance on Mother Earth. If the temperature is increased beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius, we will be living a planetary catastrophe. Given the impunity of the crimes against Mother Earth countries, is an immediate need to have an international judicial system that punishes countries that do not fulfill its international commitments to protect the integrity of Mother Earth. Capitalism has incurred multiple debts with humanity and Mother Earth, such as climate debt, social debt and ecological debt. The capitalists and developed countries have deepened the gap between rich and poor in the world, have promoted expropriation and usurpation of natural resources of peoples and Southern countries, and have accumulated wealth at the expense of the welfare of our peoples, impairing their spiritual and moral richness.

The world is losing community life and family life. Few peoples are practicing solidarity and complementarity among persons and between them and nature. Religions and spiritualities of the world are the moral safeguard society on building a culture of peace and culture of life, of dialogue to solve the climate crisis and social crisis that destroys life and our community values, and make imbalances and conflicts in societies, impoverishing people, especially the most vulnerable, children, adolescents, victims of war, human trafficking and discrimination. Because of capitalism, not only Mother Earth is sick but also humanity. Humanity must not live without values and without ethical principles. Humanity cannot live enduring the imposition of only one economic model, political, social and cultural. Humanity must not live in separate classes divided by political elites and under religions and beliefs imposed by force, under visions that separate humans from nature and break the balance between living beings. We have to heal humanity to save Mother Earth. In a scenario where our Mother Earth is more hurt and the future of humanity is in greater danger, the peoples of the world must continue dialogue and defending life.



# Our Message from Mobilization Against War and Occupation: We Have No Choice, We Have No Option, But to Organize, Educate & Mobilize Humanity is at Stake!

*By Janine Solanki*

In today's world what does it mean to be for peace or to be "antiwar?" Today the borders of the new era of war and occupation don't stop at the map of countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. This new era encompasses the recent and continued Saudi-led US-backed war on Yemen, as well as the almost 70 year occupation of Palestine. War and occupation reaches us all the way here "at home" in Canada, where imperialist governments employ Islamophobia as a means to create a climate of fear and division, to justify their wars abroad. Especially now, the human cost of war and occupation are in the faces of people who can no longer ignore wars half a world away, when the results of over 15 years of the new era of war and occupation have made war-torn homelands uninhabitable and have created the refugee crisis we see today.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) started November with a public forum on November 7th titled, "Palestine Today: Occupation is Still the Issue". This forum came in response to the increasing mass uprising of Palestinian people, especially youth, who are facing increasing repression and attacks by the Zionist Israeli regime. Following film clips looking the history of Palestine and recent news from Palestine, forum participants were treated to antiwar poetry by young Iraqi poet and activist Wala Zaidan. Forum speaker and MAWO executive committee member Azza Rojbi spoke about the situation facing Palestinian people today. Noah Fine, Jewish anti-Zionist antiwar activist and organizer spoke about the growing movement of Palestinians and concluded that this third Intifada in Palestine should be not only of Palestinians, but an Intifada of people world-wide and of Israelis too, in defense of Palestinian self-determination. To read the talks of the forum speakers please see page 22-28 in this issue of Fire This Time.

On November 24th, MAWO organized a public meeting to discuss the recent tragic terrorist attacks in Paris as well as in Lebanon, Iraq, Mali and Egypt. This meeting was organized to discuss and better understand the world-wide responses and impacts of these terrorist attacks, particularly on how they have been used by imperialist forces to ramp up Islamophobia and anti-refugee rhetoric and attacks. After watching news clips on the recent events, MAWO chair Alison Bodine gave a presentation to open what was an energetic and fruitful discussion among the participants. This discussion better prepared MAWO activists for taking to the streets a few days later on November 28th, for MAWO's monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign. Many passerby's stopped by the info table in Downtown Vancouver or engaged in conversation with petitioners on the very topic of how the recent terrorist attacks and refugee crisis are a direct cause of the US-led wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and



Libya, and their imperialist actions beyond. As Canada is now in the first month of a new Liberal government with the new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, MAWO's new petition demanded that this government stop their participation, in any form, in the wars in Iraq and Syria.

Organizing these events is one very important aspect of MAWO's work, however another aspect of antiwar organizing is to give support and participate in other group's events which are working in the same vein of antiwar and anti-imperialist struggles. As this article began, "antiwar" encompasses many struggles and uniting those struggles makes our common fight stronger and more effective. MAWO participated in the November 21st Vigil United with Humanity, to support an event that aimed to remind people that whether terrorist attacks are in Paris, Beirut, Iraq or Mali, or are the terror of wars and occupations, the simple fact is that humanity as a whole is under attack and must come together to resist terrorism, whether at the hand of ISIS or at the hand of imperialism.

On November 27th, MAWO endorsed and supported the public forum "Stolen Land: First Nations Palestinians at Frontlines of Resistance" which was sponsored by Canada Palestine Association/BDS Vancouver, Canadian Boat to Gaza, Independent Jewish Voices - Vancouver, South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy, and UBC Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights. The event focused on the common struggle of Indigenous nations for self-determination, from here in Canada to Palestine.

MAWO recognizes that another war we must fight against, is the war against the destruction and degradation of environment. Wars and occupations are some of the biggest culprits for environmental catastrophes, while the nature of imperialism consumes and degrades the environment with profit as their only concern. MAWO participated in the Vancouver rally against climate change on November 29th along with thousands of Vancouverites, and marched in the streets holding MAWO's banner reading "Stop the War! Stop the Occupation! Stop Environmental Degradation!" The march and rally, organized by many local groups and individuals, coincided with the COP21 United Nations Climate Summit in Paris, and was part of demonstrations taking place around the world.

In one month MAWO either organized or participated in a wide range of events, uniting many related struggles. But one thing is clear: Now is the time for unity. We must bring our forces together, to bring an end to imperialist wars and occupations, to bring an end to all forms of terrorism, to bring an end to environmental degradation, and to work together for a better world! Humanity is at stake!

## "By Any Means Necessary..."



### MALCOLM X SPEAKS

It is impossible for capitalism to survive, primarily because the system of capitalism needs some blood to suck. Capitalism used to be like an eagle, but now it's more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody's blood whether they were strong or not. But now it has become more cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless. As the nations of the world free themselves, then capitalism has less victims, less to suck, and it becomes weaker and weaker. It's only a matter of time in my opinion before it will collapse completely.

*Excerpt from an interview with Young Socialists on January 18, 1965.*





*December 17th, 2014: Historic Victory for the Cuban People & the World*



# Palestine Today: Occupation is **STILL** the Issue!

On Saturday, November 7, 2015 Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) organized a public community forum & discussion titled, "Palestine Today: Occupation is Still the Issue!"

*Fire This Time* is publishing the talks of the two speakers of the night Noah Fine and Azza Rojbi.

## A talk By Noah Fine

Hello everyone and thanks for inviting me to give my perspective on this issue as a Jewish peace activist.

Like Alison mentioned, I'm Jewish. I grew up, I could say pretty much as typically Jewish as any other Jewish family would in Canada. I went to synagogue, although not all the time, however to be honest I was never too thrilled to go. Although it was a real chore for my parents to get me to go to synagogue, I had a Bar Mitzvah when I was 13, which I was very excited about.

## Growing Up As A Normal Jewish Kid

This is called a tallit, it's something you receive on your Bar Mitzvah, the theme

of the one I have is based on Joseph's coat of many colours (displaying a Jewish garment used at religious activities). So I grew up in a family that embraced Judaism. I grew up understanding I was Jewish, but like many Jews growing up in Canada, or the United States or Britain, basically everywhere outside occupied Palestine or Israel, lacking an understanding of what Israel is.

I've been to Israel likely half a dozen times as a kid. My parents would bring me, I still have lots of family there. Going to Israel, for me, was the same as my parents telling me "Hey, we're going to England!" What was the difference to me? I thought Israel was a country like any other country. I didn't know about the Palestinian cause. I didn't know that the place we were going was on top of another people's land. For

me at the time, it might as well be Disneyland. The politics weren't an issue of discussion in my family.

I wanted to bring that point because I think it's important for us to understand that this is the reality of a lot of young Jews outside of Israel. Most of us not only do not know the truth about Palestine and Israel, we don't know anything about Palestine and Israel at



all.

So that gives people a better understanding of what we're dealing with when we're talking about unity between Palestinians and Jewish people or bringing Jewish people to the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. The reality is, like many people in the US or Canada, not many people are concerned enough unfortunately about what's going on around the world, what our governments are involved in, and that's the trick. That's where we need to aim our sights with Jewish people, the same with all people. With education about the reality of what's going on there, because Jewish people, like Muslim people, like people in Canada, the US or anywhere, typically when we know the truth we make good decisions. We make correct decisions, because at our base we all believe in a good life. We want a family, a nice place to live. All of these things are basic human interests no matter what our religion is.

## **There Are Indeed Good First Steps to Take**

If you haven't come to a MAWO rally, I





suggest you do. We do tabling in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver and get into all kinds of debates and discussions with people. We receive a lot of support, less and less people who don't support us. But we run into this argument a lot: "But isn't war human nature?" Who hasn't heard that argument before? I thought about that argument for a long time. I thought to myself, "is it true?" Is it human nature to do war? I mean, it is true that wars have been going on since the beginning of recorded history, there have always been fights going on, there have always been killings, so is it possible it's true? Is war human nature?

Then I thought, "I'm human and it's not my nature." So when people tell me that, I ask them "Is that your nature?" "Are you for war?" "Are you for killing people?" And they say, "well, no... not me but..." and I say "Well, aren't you human?" and they say "...yaaaa..." then I say, "So what's human nature then? Your nature or those who do wars nature?" It turns out it is a reasonable argument to show people it's not human nature. In fact, it is something very alien to human nature which brings about war, which brings about killing and murder, occupations and all of these things which are symbolic of the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

### Can Holocaust Be An Excuse to Suppress Palestinians

One of the closest resemblances to the occupation of Palestine by Israel ironically is Nazi Germany, especially for what they did to Jewish people. You can see many similarities between the methods used against Jewish people and the methods used by the state of Israel against



Palestinians. I think that there are a lot of interesting conclusions and arguments to be made about what the government of Israel is doing to the Palestinian people.

I almost forgot to show, and I'll pass it around so you can see (a photo of Noah as a child holding an Israeli flag in Israel). I stole this from my father it's the only copy. I don't know if he even noticed that it was gone. It's not something I feel ashamed of because I was a child but to give you an idea of my past this a picture of me at three years old in Israel on my grandparents farm in Israel. Just to give you an impression of my life as a child or my memories. When I was in Israel these little lizards would climb up on the screen door and me and my sister would spend hours flicking them off. Those are the types of memories I have from going there as a kid.

My grandparents lived on a chicken farm. I remember being punished when my work was to collect the eggs with my sister. I somehow got it into my head that my job was to throw the eggs at the wall. Which it turns out was in fact not my responsibility.

I explain these things to give an idea of where I'm coming from and where many Jewish people are coming from and that Jewish people and Palestinian people are fundamentally the same as any other human beings. So what's the problem then? If we come to the conclusion that basically Jewish people and Palestinian people

are the same. Once we understand that we are similar then we look at what the problem is. It's a government, a state, the state of Israel. What's the ideology behind that state? It's something called Zionism, which goes back to well before the state of Israel was established. An ideology of a pure Jewish state, founded in the description of Zionism. Now does that remind you of anything? Purity? In fact this was used before actually against Jewish people by Nazi Germany. So we see a lot of interesting similarities between what Nazis did to Jews and what Israel does to Palestinians. This is an ideology, a racist ideology, a pro-war ideology, a conquest ideology. Do you think this is the final plan for Israel? What we see on the map? Heck no! That's not the plan, that's nothing compared to what the state of Israel and Zionism has in mind. What Zionism wants is a project a lot bigger than what you see in front of us now. And that's a scary thought. Going back to what we call similarities between fascist Germany and Israel is the expansionism we saw from Germany at that time.

### State of Israel and Zionism

The state of Israel, and I want to bring a quote from Lord Balfour who, on behalf of Britain, was the third party who gave the land of Palestine to the Zionists. They thought it was in Britain's reasonable power to give away other people's land. He said in 1917 "In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country... The four great powers have taken up the Zionist cause. And Zionism, be it just or false,



Israeli forces violently disperse protests in the West Bank against Israeli occupation 2014



good or bad, is rooted in long-standing traditions, in present needs, and in future hopes that are far more important than the desires or the frustrations of the 700,000 Arabs who live on this ancient land today.”

From something said 100 years ago, we can see the idea, the plan and the concept that he was translating from Zionists for the four powers to understand is exactly what is happening today. How can all these U.N. resolutions pass in favor of Palestine? How come the majority of people in the world support Palestine and still nothing happens? Because the same powers that established Israel, today still rule and make sure Israel continues to exist and expand. Which is why, with all their power you can say a majority of human beings are against it, but the majority of human beings still, and I'll talk about this a bit more while wrapping up, are not strong enough in action to reverse this situation.

The other thing I wanted to talk a bit about, within what Azza was describing and what we saw in the videos of this assault by Israel against Palestinians, is this heroic resistance of Palestinian people. In very classic form since the beginning of the state of Israel until now, within the same idea of not caring about Palestinian people, like Balfour said, the state of Israel continues today. I don't think it's very surprising coming from the mouth it does, we've all heard some of the most ridiculous things stated, in public, to date, by Prime Minister of Israel Netanyahu. Some of you will remember his comments from October 20 of this year, in his speech called “The 10 Big Lies” and his justification for the occupation of Palestine, which he read to the World Zionist Congress.

Netanyahu said, “Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time. He wanted to expel the Jews. And Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Palestinian Mufti of Jerusalem, went to Hitler and said: ‘If you expel them, they'll all come here.’” So what should I do with them?” Hitler asked. The mufti said: ‘Burn them.’” When

Netanyahu made this statement in public, it brought this issue far beyond progressive-minded forward-thinking people like us in this room. Even Zionist opposition parties within Israel were like, “this guy is crazy”. One: The complete fabrication of history. Two: Isn't this the same state that always accuses people of holocaust denial? What greater holocaust denial could you have, than taking the blame of the holocaust off of the executioner and putting it on some individual in Palestine, and then collectively punishing an entire population of Palestinian people as justification? And more strange, that this is coming 70 years after the occupation of Palestine, or what



***Palestinian women protest the occupation marching toward the Qalandia checkpoint separating Ramallah and Jerusalem***

we see as the occupation of Palestine today. All of a sudden there is a new piece of history that nobody knew before, that actually the Palestinians were to blame for the Holocaust. The reality is that not that many people bought his statement, and Netanyahu had to apologize for his comments. And of course, as things go the retractions or apologies for stupid things done never unfortunately outweigh the impact of stupid things said in the first place.

Within all this resistance of Palestinian people and this crackdown by Israel, you have comments like this, which fuel the fire. But comments like this come from something very concrete, it wasn't pure stupidity on Netanyahu's part. This is part of a campaign, because Netanyahu knows something very important, the United States knows something very important, and Palestinian people know something

very important. Which is that the state of Israel is losing a lot of the blind faith that Jewish people living in Israel used to give, that Jewish people around the world used to give, and this is a serious problem.

### **There Are Good People Everywhere**

There have always been Jewish people's organizations that on some level or another have supported some part of the Palestinian cause. Just a few months ago we were doing our monthly rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and a woman came by and saw our information about Palestine and said “Hmm... I'm Jewish” and I thought “oh no, I know where this is going.” She said, “Every month I go out with a group of women and we go to the border checks and make sure that Israeli soldiers don't harass Palestinian people.” So this is a Jewish woman, she was in her mid-60's, and she works in an organization of women who go to the check-points and monitor them to make sure Israeli occupation forces are not harassing Palestinian people, and they document harassment done by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) against Palestinian people.

Now, this woman, maybe she believes in some part of Israel. Maybe she is what they call a “soft Zionist”. But let's understand a reality, even though that's not my belief. This is someone who's living in the condition that every day since day one that brain was pounded that the state of Israel is the Jewish people's land, that we have to take it from the Arabs, and on and on. Every day, taught in school, on every piece of information. Israel is likely, I would say, the most politicized place on earth. Everything you look at is political there, you just can't avoid it, and that's the condition people are growing up in there. So when somebody does an act against the state of Israel and for the Palestinian people, we have to understand that's a big step, even though we want much more.

### **A Little History**

I believe the signs of change are becoming clearer, and became clearer around the time



of the Occupy Wall Street and MENA popular resistance movements. Around that time of different social movements happening around the world, Israel and people in Israel were a part of that. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish Israelis went to the streets against the government of Israel. Some of them with causes for the Palestinians, some of them causes for Jewish people, because the reality is, life isn't that sweet for Jewish people in Israel. The reality is, a lot of the decision makers and very wealthy ruling class, capitalist class Jewish people aren't living in Israel. Who would want to live there? They live in New York, they live in London, Toronto, they live in many places. A lot of these Jewish Israeli people are working class people, oppressed people, unemployed or under-employed people.

So going back to Netanyahu, and the state of Israel's fear is something really important and something we need to be constantly observing and constantly pushing for. Something that could dramatically and completely change the course of events is Jewish people in Israel, Jewish people around the world, separating more and more with the state of Israel, finding conflict with the state of Israel, changing opinions, changing ideas to completely alternate ideas. What that does, when they move away from the state of Israel, is it brings them closer to their natural ally: Palestinian people.

They are both oppressed, although at very different levels, by the same force, which is the state of Israel, backed by the US, backed by Britain, backed by Canada. So this dynamic is the scariest thing that could possibly happen to any oppressor state, when oppressed people unite and fight them. This is what is important and where I wanted to conclude for the day. This is exactly the concept that we need to rally behind: Jewish and Palestinian people, together, fighting the Zionist state of Israel. Because, I believe that we've finished with the argument of 'if war is in our nature,' we can realize that basically people's nature is peace. Jewish people and Palestinian people can live together, in fact they did for many years before the state of Israel. This is what I would argue is the solution to the 'Palestinian problem'.

### Two-State or One-State Solution?

The two-state solution, since they came

up with that idea, was only a way to shut up the world community, shut up the Palestinian community while Israel expanded their occupying forces across the map. It was a stoned, completely drunk idea, an impossible idea. Impossible not just because it was not possible, but Israel was not doing it. They don't want it, it's not in their interests to do it, it is not in Zionist's ideology to do it. It just wasn't their plan and they have shown that it was not in their plan. However what is possible is Jewish people and Palestinian people uniting, together, in one country called Palestine, where each person gets a vote, where the millions of Palestinians who were thrown off their land and their children who have been born and grown up since then, have the right to return to that land, everyone lives together with one vote, one state that they share together. And I think that's the only solution.

Imagine the possibilities, the examples that would mean for the world if such a thing happened. That's what our job is, to push for peace in this situation because as long as the state of Israel exists, there will not be peace in the Middle East. As long as the state of Israel exists, you will see constant torment, war, plunder, occupation, oppression in the Middle East. So one of our main goals, as peace-loving people, should be to dismantle the state of Israel, all of its aspects, apartheid walls, military, everything, and get down to the reality which is that we can live pretty well in peace, we can live pretty well equally, and so why not do it?

### We Want Long Lasting Peace

So in conclusion I would just like to say, let this third Intifada be not only an Intifada of Palestinian people, but let it be an Intifada of Palestinian people and Jewish people against the enemy of both which is the state of Israel. And let us all, no matter where we are in the world, get behind that Intifada, until the dying day of the Zionist regime of Israel. Let us fight for peace, let's struggle for peace! I hope you'll all join us in that struggle.

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# LONG LIVE PALESTINE

## Long Live The 3rd Intifada

A talk By Azza Rojbi

Thank you Alison and thank you to everyone for coming. I know it's a Saturday night, there is just so many other things you could be doing but you took the time to be here, because you believe this is an important event and because you believe in the cause of Palestine, you felt the need to do something for Palestine, you needed to come and discuss, so I want to thank you all for being here tonight.

### **Palestine Is In Our Heart**

First, before I start, as Alison said I am originally from Tunisia, I was born and raised there. As I can tell a lot of people present here tonight identify as Arab or Muslim, I know the case of Palestine is very dear to our hearts. For me growing up in Tunisia the first protest I went to was a protest for Palestine. I want to share with you tonight how it happened. I was in middle school, it was at a time of increased Israeli attacks on Gaza and there were movements and protests all over the Middle East and all over the world. In our school the administration was trying to discourage students from protesting and taking the streets. The location of our middle school made it harder for them to succeed in that, as our middle school was right next to a high school and a university.

It had started with the university students, that day they held a student strike and they started a big protest for Palestine. It was kind of funny because the university shared a wall full of holes with the high school, the university students took advantage of that and jumped through into the high school and literally went inside each class and told the teacher "We're sorry there is no class today, we are all going on a march for Palestine". After taking out the high school students they jumped into our middle school and did the same thing



**Over 100,000 march in London in solidarity with Palestine. 2014**

they came to everyone's class and got us out on the streets, everyone came out even some of the teachers joined in. This was the first time that I really took the street for any cause, it was for Palestine and we ended up marching to a lot of other schools in that neighbourhood and got more students to join us in the street for Palestine.

When I moved to Canada five years ago, one time I was walking by Joyce-Collingwood station and I saw a poster for an antiwar rally that was happening about Palestine and it was organized by Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) so I said to myself "that's interesting there is people in Vancouver that are organising about Palestine,

I want to go and see" and I did. I joined in and became an organizer with MAWO. We all have different stories about why we support Palestine, either it's a personal story or just the fact that we believe in justice, we believe in fairness, we believe in humanity. You don't have to be Muslim or Jewish or have a connection to Palestine you just have to know the facts and it is enough to make anyone angry or make anyone upset

about what's happening because it's such an unfair injustice going on for so many years, so many decades.

### **Main Stream Media and Palestine**

The same goes for the mainstream media, sometimes they will pick up the issue of Palestine, people will warm up then the news stops talking about Palestine, and the issue will cool down again. This is the same as what we are seeing now. The news media has picked up the story of all the stabbings that have happened, they're spinning the story that Palestinians are killing Israeli civilians and that this entire crisis is caused by the Israeli government decision to tighten the access of Muslims to Masjed Al



Aqsa. This may be part of the story, the Palestinians taking to the streets is not just a response to this specific incident the way that the media is portraying it. The Palestinian people have been living under constant attacks and humiliation by the Israeli government. If you are a kid in Palestine, from birth you're under occupation, you're under harassment every day of your life.

We've seen in some of the videos earlier examples of what the daily life for Palestinians look like. Can you imagine going to buy milk at a convenient store here in Canada while there are clashes and police firing at people right outside of the store? A Palestinian kid will tell you "yes that happens every day, that's my life, that's how it has been since I was born, that's how my mom has seen it. What else is out there except for this life?" That is not a life that any kid or any human being should live, a life under continual attacks. If you woke up every day and someone punches you what are you gonna do? Punch back. What else would you expect from any kid, from any person, if their whole life they've been harassed and harassed, then to resist and to defend themselves?

### Ongoing Violations of Human Rights and Palestinians Under Daily Violence

One of the videos we watched earlier was about an arson attack on two homes in the village of Duma carried out by extremist Israeli settlers on July 31, 2015. An 18-month year old baby was burned to death inside the house and his dad also passed away a couple of days later. On September 7, 2015 the mother also died of her injuries. A whole family was destroyed and until now there is no real investigation or any real consequences for those responsible of these atrocities. This is insane! This is crazy! Only one son survived the attack and he is still in the hospital fighting for his life, his whole family was killed. Then they come and ask us why Palestinian youth in the streets are throwing stones at us? Well, you've bombed their houses, you've killed their parents and now they resist and throw a stone back and you throw them in prison! Only in the month of October about 1,200 Palestinians were arrested according to the Palestinian prisoner

rights group Addameer.

On November 2nd, 2015, the Israeli government passed a law that enforces a minimum three year prison sentence for any Palestinian who throws stones at the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) or the Israeli police. Against big machine guns and tanks, defending yourself with a stone is a crime! As if it's not enough that your dad was killed, that your family was destroyed now you have to be tortured in Israeli prison for a minimum of three years. Your whole youth is stripped away from you, you have no future. Well you already had no future, you are fighting for one!

It is important that when people talk about Palestine we ask them to look at both sides of the story in a very fair way, we can't just talk about how many Israelis have been killed this time or stabbed

the right to shoot and then investigate later. Those lives don't matter, your life is worth more! You don't even have to try to talk to them or see if there is any base to your suspicion or any of those things, you just have the right to shoot to kill, that's your right to defend yourself.

I want to read from Amnesty International, actually there is a good report that Amnesty International released on October 27th, 2015 that puts together many cases of IDF abuse. They had people on the ground in Jerusalem and they documented examples of Palestinian youth that were killed in the month of October with no reason just for the fact that they were walking in the street, basically that they were Palestinian. I have the full report if you want to see it later, right now I am just going to read a small paragraph



**Monthly antiwar rally organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) demands "Israel Hands off Palestine!" & "Self-determination for Palestine!" 2015**

that time and constantly condemns the Palestinian side. The current situation of violence in Palestine is the creation of the context of what youth and all Palestinians are living under every day.

According to Amnesty International and lot of other human rights organisations, the Israeli government and the IDF were actually responsible for the killing a lot of teenagers just in the month of October, without any proof of any wrong doings. Those are teenagers that are crossing through check points, they're being asked to show their ID... if you are an Israeli soldier you don't even have to see that person taking a knife or present any real threat toward your life, if you fear something may happen you have

from it:

"In an especially egregious case, Israeli forces shot dead 19-year-old Sa'ad Muhammad Youssef al-Atrash in the Old City of Hebron as he attempted to retrieve an ID card at an Israeli soldier's request on 26 October. The Israeli police labelled the incident an "attempted stabbing" but an eyewitness watching the events unfold from her balcony said he had posed no threat when he was shot. One of the soldiers had asked him for ID, and as he reached into his pocket to grab his card another soldier standing behind him shot him on his right side, she told Amnesty International. The eyewitness said he was shot six or seven times and bled profusely as he lay on the



ground for about 40 minutes afterwards, while soldiers failed to provide medical treatment. She also reported seeing soldiers bring a knife and place it in the dying man's hand."

So this is Amnesty International which is not an organisation that is always very progressive, a lot of time they say things that I don't agree with personally but in this specific case it is important to see that even a big organisation like this, that gets a lot of funding from different U.S. government institutions, they can't even close their eyes, they still had to report what's happening and what's happening is outrageous!

### **Canada is Silent on Israeli Atrocities**

In our media here, if you turn on the news in Canada or the U.S. all we see is about the stabbing of Israelis, the death of 9 Israelis against the death of 73 Palestinians which are not reported. Those lives don't matter, those are just all terrorists, all those kids, all those mothers, all those babies are all terrorists. They're born terrorists, that's basically what the mainstream media tells us. We have to exterminate these people; they are all after us to kill us. And all this discourse of hate takes over the news, while the Palestinian voice is never heard.

When I was looking at some of the videos for tonight, something that came up is that when you actually watch interviews with Palestinians and hear what they have to say, they say we don't want this life of violence and conflicts. In one of those videos a Palestinian man said "If I had a choice I wouldn't be in the streets doing this, I want to get an education, I want to go to school, I want to get married, I want to have life, I want

to be equal, I want to leave peacefully with my brothers Jewish, Christian or Muslim, it doesn't matter." A lot of Palestinian youth feel this way, they want to have a "normal life" but they cannot. Since they are born they are put into a situation of survival and resistance to defend themselves and their land. This is not about religion; it is about colonialism.



***Palestinian children wave flags at Israeli forces during a protest against the illegal Israeli settlements near the West Bank village of Burin 2013***



***Tens of thousands of Palestinians in Israel demonstrate as part of a general strike on October 13, 2015***

It is important to realise that all this talk about Palestinians and Arabs hating Jews and all that rhetoric is just to create more and more violence and division among us. The old divide and conquer tactics!

### **Palestinian Struggle Continues, So Does the Solidarity Movement**

I want to end on a couple of points, first is that I think it is important that we don't just talk about Palestine when things escalate, that we keep talking about Palestine, that we keep educating people

especially here in Canada. We live in a country that's very much friends with Israel, it doesn't matter if it was Stephen Harper and it is the Liberals now, Canada closes its eyes and ears to the atrocities committed by Israel, they don't care about what happens to the Palestinian people, they don't care about human rights in Palestine. We

need to make them accountable and that's why we need to talk to people around us to explain what the real situation is, that what we see in the news is half of the story, it is not even half of the story, it is a tiny tiny bit of the reality of life under occupation in Palestine. We need to educate people and win them to our side, we need to convince them to join us in action, to take the streets for Palestine and not only when specific incidents happen but more frequently.

And it's hard sometimes to try to explain all of the situation to someone that has never heard about the history of Palestine before, but I think what we can all agree on is that we all care about each other and about a just and fair country and a just and fair world

where Palestinian, Jewish, Christians and Muslims all leave together under a peaceful country that's Palestine. Where it doesn't matter what your religion is, it doesn't matter what your ethnicity is, we are all equal!

Thank you.





# Fire This Time!

## Campaign for \$20,000 for 2016 A Fundraising Appeal! A great Response So Far!

October 15, 2015 to January 15, 2016

Dear Fire This Time Reader,

The first Fire This Time newspaper was published in February of 2003, as part of the international movement that organized the largest mobilizations in human history against the invasion of Iraq. It was also a time of deep and drastic government cuts to social programs across Canada. Today, thirteen years later, the only change has been a further escalation of the war against oppressed people at home and abroad. The new era of war and occupation, of which Canada is an active participant, has seen many countries invaded and occupied, millions killed and millions more made refugees. Meanwhile, the gap between the rich and the poor is ever increasing and government crackdowns on human rights such as Bill C-51 are used to try and instill fear and silence dissent.

*For the last thirteen years, Fire This Time has refused to be silent. We continue to reflect the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society. With the perspective that, "Every international fight is local and every local fight is international," we have also continually highlighted the fightback of working and oppressed people across the globe. This has included a special focus on Latin-America, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.*

IN A WORLD WHERE THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IS DOMINATED BY A NARROW, CORPORATE AND ANTI-HUMAN AGENDA, FIRE THIS TIME PRESENTS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT IS INTELLECTUALLY HONEST AND PRESENTS FACTS AND ANALYSIS FOR

THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED TO KNOW THE TRUTH AND WANT TO BRING ABOUT A BETTER WORLD.

*In the past 13 years we have published 70 issues and distributed over 600,000 individual copies of Fire This Time at bus stations, rallies, picket lines, international gatherings and everywhere in between. We see the newspaper as a mobilizer which connects struggles and urges oppressed people to, "Think socially and act politically".*

★ ★ In 2012, FTT Editorial Board member Thomas Davies and 2 contributors were assaulted, handcuffed and dragged into police cars for refusing to stop distributing FTTs at the Metrotown Skytrain Station. Once again we were able to mount a popular public campaign which forced the authorities to write a written statement acknowledging our right to distribute at the stations. We have since returned time and time again and we refuse to be intimidated.

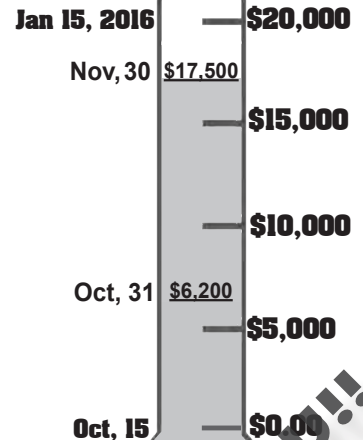
**"The truth must not only be the truth, it must be told." - Fidel**

*But now we really need your help!*

If you agree that the newspaper is unique and important, we ask you to make a financial contribution, no matter how small (or how large!) to enable us to continue printing in the coming year. We have calculated that we will need a minimum of \$20,000 to continue publishing Fire This Time as a free, monthly, social justice newspaper for 12 months in 2016. We have launched a campaign to raise these funds by January 15, 2016 and we are really counting on your support!

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Thank you for all the support! We look forward to continuing work together to build a better world!  
In Solidarity,

Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper



# ¡Venceremos!

# We Will Win!



## **Thousands in London, Madrid protest military intervention in Syria**

November 28, 2015 (PRESS TV)

Some 5,000 people gathered Saturday in central London while holding placards that read “Don’t bomb Syria”, “Drop Cameron, not bombs” and “Don’t add fuel to the fire.”

“David Cameron’s incoherent proposals for action in Syria will do nothing to weaken ISIL but will instead inflame the civil war, deepen the misery of the Syrian people and increase the terrorist risk,” said a Stop the War Coalition member during the protest.

Addressing the British parliament on Thursday, UK Prime Minister David Cameron explained his plans for British fighter planes, already bombing the Takfiri terrorists in Iraq, to join France and the US in targeting Daesh positions in Syria.

A parliamentary vote on the subject is set to be held next week, when a large number of politicians reluctant to commence Syria attacks are expected to change their minds over the recent Paris attacks.

No to war

In Spain, at least 5,000 people gathered in the capital to protest the government’s potential involvement in the conflict in Syria.

Thousands of protesters gather in front of the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, Spain in protest to potential Spanish military intervention in Syria, November 28, 2015. (EPA)

Following the protest, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announced that he would hold off on any decision related to the subject.

“Decisions have to be well thought through, as in any aspect of life,” said Rajoy, adding that Madrid was also discussing the matter with its allies.

## **CELAC to support legally binding climate change agreement**

November 10, 2015 (Granma News)

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) will support the adoption of a legally binding and universal climate change agreement during the forthcoming Climate Change Conference (COP21), the organization noted in a statement published yesterday in Ecuador.

In the document, disseminated by the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Human Mobility of Ecuador, currently the integrationist organization’s President pro tempore, CELAC gave details about its most recent meeting held in the country on November 6.

Thanks to efforts by the Ecuadorian government, the goal of working to establish a common position looking toward the 21st UN Climate Change Conference, has been achieved, the report notes.

The COP21 event will take place in Paris during the first two weeks of December. According to CELAC, there, nations must reach a universal and legally binding agreement able to effectively contribute to the battle against the threat of climate change; a phenomenon for which industrialized nations are largely responsible.

Important advances in identifying some 20 possible aspects of the organization’s common position toward COP21 were made during the high level meeting. Common challenges facing 33 CELAC member nations in regards to mitigation and adaptation to climate change, access to financing, clean technologies and capacity building were also identified during the regional encounter.

Problems relating to climate vulnerability, losses and damages, especially considering current and future threats of hurricanes, floods, droughts, retreating glaciers, rising sea levels and El Niño and La Niña phenomena, among others, were also addressed during the CELAC meeting.

## **Cuban lung cancer medicine receives Innovation Award**

November 19, 2015 (Granma News)

The medication Vaxira to treat advanced large cell lung cancer, developed by Cuba’s Molecular Immunology Center, received the Prize for Creativity and Technological Innovation 2015, awarded by the Cuban Industrial Property Office (OCPI).

Registered in Cuba since 2012 after being approved by the Center for State Control of Medicines, Equipment and Medical Devices (Cecmed), the product shows positive results

in prolonging and improving the quality of patients’ lives, and has low toxicity levels resulting in less of the unpleasant side effects associated with other necessary therapeutic procedures.

The safety of the product allows it to be administered over long periods of time through the primary healthcare system, and is also suitable for elderly people suffering from the disease.

Vaxira is patented in 17 countries, while clinical trials are currently underway to assess its possible use in treating varieties of breast and ovarian cancer

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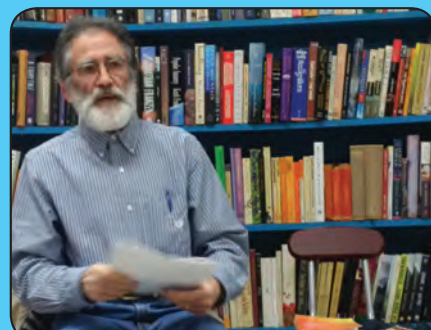
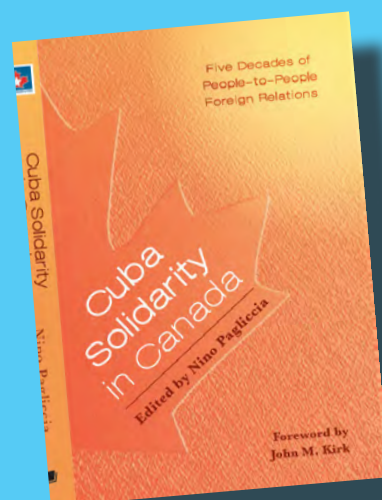
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# Cuba Solidarity in Canada

## Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations



Nino Pagliccia speaking at book launch at  
Peoples Co-op Book Store, Feb. 26, 2015.

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# Delegates Demand to the U.S.: Close Guantanamo Military Base in Cuba!

*By Thomas Davies*

200 Delegates from over 30 countries around the world recently returned home from the successful 4th International Seminar on Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases. The 3 day gathering was sponsored by the Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty of the People (MOVPAZ), the Cuban Institute of Friendship of the People (ICAP) and the Global Peace Council. Held in the Guantánamo Province of Cuba, the meetings happened in the shadow of the US military base in Guantanamo Bay. "GTMO" has illegally occupied 117 square kilometres of Cuban territory for over 100 years, as well being infamous as a detention and torture camp since 2002 and the beginning stage of the US "War on Terror".

The conference took place during a dynamic and important time in US-Cuba relations. Almost one year ago, Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama announced that after over 50 years diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US would resume, and negotiations would begin towards the "normalization" of relations between the two countries. The announcement also included the incredible news that the remaining Cuban 5 political prisoners held in US jails were being released and headed home to their families in Cuba. While this was a major victory, Cuba has made it clear that there is no "normalization" until the illegal and immoral US blockade of Cuba is lifted, and the US closes its military base in

Guantanamo and returns the land to Cuba.

## Foreign Military Bases – A Global Cancer

The US has at least 800 military bases in other countries around the world. While the US bases are centres of war and occupation, they also have devastating effects on the local populations. Delegates from Japan, Colombia, Mexico and the Marshall Islands all brought testimony of the terrible consequences of having US military bases on their land. Already there are 131 US military facilities and 50,000 US troops in Japan. On Okinawa alone there have been over 5,000 arrests of US soldiers for abuses including murder and rape of the local population, with the perpetrators rarely facing consequences.

## International Pressure Continues

Conference presenters detailed how despite over 50 years of protest by the Cuban government, the US refuses to leave its military base in Cuba. It cites the Cuban-American Treaty of 1903 which established Guantanamo Bay as a US naval base, with both parties needing to consent to its closing. Since the Cuban Revolution of 1959 Cuba has reiterated the obvious: the treaty was imposed by force on Cuba, and the naval base is not welcome. The US for its part has made it clear that it has complete disregard for the sovereignty of Cuba. It sends a cheque of \$4,085 each year as a supposed rental payment for the land, which Cuba refuses to cash.



One of the most important aspects of the conference was the high participation of organizations and individuals from within the United States. CODEPINK, a major women-led peace organization, brought a delegation of over 60 members while the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity of the Peoples as well as Witness Against Torture, the United National Antiwar Coalition and many other organizations sent delegations as well. Retired US Army Colonel Ann Wright led the CODEPINK delegation, and gave a presentation titled, "The Presence and Impact of US Military Bases in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Threats to Peace in the Region".

## Pushing the Campaign Further

Thomas Davies from Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), and Azza Rojbi of the recently reorganized Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB) participated in the conference. Both organizations came with many different materials, from banners to buttons to postcards, which were very popular among participants. These were to share with conference participants and emphasize that the Cuba solidarity movement must continue with the momentum and level of organization and coordination gained by the Cuban 5 victory, as well as utilize the lessons learned of the necessity of the consistent and creative campaigns. The Free



Opening day of the 4th International Seminar on Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases. November 23, 2015. Guantánamo, Cuba



the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver (now FCAB) organized 110 consecutive monthly pickets in front of the US Consulate in Vancouver demanding the release of the Cuban 5. Now, for the last 3 months FCAB has joined the international call to organize solidarity actions on December 17 by organizing its own consecutive monthly pickets in front of the US Consulate demanding, “End the Blockade on Cuba Now!” “Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!” Organizers

in Toronto and Quebec have joined as well. Ottawa organizers are also busy organizing an action in front of the US Embassy on December 17.

The 4th International Seminar on Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases was a successful gathering because it brought organizers together from around the world to emphasize an important point: Foreign military bases, especially of US origin, are a global problem and therefore require a global movement

to defeat them. VCSC and FCAB organizers also played an important role in demonstrating and proposing concrete actions for the international campaign move forward with. The people of Cuba also demonstrated again they are more than willing to join this fight, not just to close the base they suffer from on their own land, but every base everywhere. Together and united, the world demands, “Return Guantanamo to Cuba! Close all Foreign Military Bases Now!”

## Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB), Monthly Picket Actions Gains Momentum

*By Azza Rojbi*

The U.S. Blockade on Cuba is a cruel and inhumane policy which has negatively affected every aspect of Cuban society for over 5 decades. For the 24th consecutive year, on October 27 the world voted overwhelmingly in favour of Cuba's resolution demanding an end to the criminal and illegal blockade of Cuba by the United States. The results at the United Nations General Assembly were 191 in favor of Cuba. Only the U.S. and Israel voted to keep the unjust blockade on Cuba. This decision clearly showed the hypocrisy of the U.S. government talk about normalizing relations with Cuba while one of the most outrageous parts of the U.S.'s aggression towards Cuba is still in full force.

On November 17th, 2015, the newly formed Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB) held their 3rd monthly picket action to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba. Peace loving people and supporters of Cuba braved the stormy day and rallied in front of the U.S. consulate in Vancouver with their picket signs demanding “End the U.S. blockade on Cuba NOW!” “Return Guantánamo to Cuba NOW!”.

In between rounds of energetic picketing and chanting, participants heard from different local and international speakers and Cuba solidarity activists. This included Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Gloria La Riva from the newly formed Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee in the U.S. who spoke to the rally over phone

from San Francisco.

Azza Rojbi, co-coordinator of FCAB and Thomas Davies, executive member of VCSC spoke about the illegal occupation of Guantánamo by the United States and their upcoming participation at the 4th International Seminar for Peace and Abolition of Foreign Military Bases, November 22-25 in Guantánamo, Cuba. To read the report back from their trip please see page 32 in this issue of Fire This Time Newspaper.

Join Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver this December 17th 4pm in front of the U.S. consulate in Vancouver as we mark one year after the historic victory of the freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes and as we continue our struggle to demand:

> END THE  
BLOCKADE ON  
CUBA NOW!  
> RETURN  
GUANTANAMO  
TO CUBA NOW!  
> US  
GOVERNMENT  
STOP THE

CAMPAIGN OF 'REGIME  
CHANGE' IN CUBA AND  
IMMEDIATELY STOP  
INTERFERING IN CUBA'S  
SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-  
DETERMINATION!

1 YEAR AFTER 'NORMALIZATION' BEGAN, WE CONTINUE TO DEMAND  
**U.S. GOVERNMENT:**

**LIFT THE  
BLOCKADE ON CUBA!  
RETURN GUANTANAMO  
TO CUBA!**



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# The Truth Behind the Paris Terrorist Murders

*Statement by the United National Antiwar Coalition, November 19, 2015\**  
[www.unacpeace.org](http://www.unacpeace.org)

The tragic terrorist murders of 189 innocent Parisians and the wounding of 359 others on the evening of November 13 are inseparable outcomes of the never-ending imperialist wars in the Middle East.

Just as the U.S. responded to the 9/11 terrorist attacks with wars and immediate enactment of heightened surveillance and repressive measures to curb dissent, the French government is doing the same, ready to exploit the horrific murders and grief to increase fear and anger towards Muslims and refugees, rather than looking at the root causes of these acts.

Millions of innocents, men, women and children, have been brutally murdered over the past 15 years by the U.S. war machine – the most powerful military force on earth – ceaselessly deployed in the interests of the corporate elite who prioritize the oil wars and the super profits of the government's military-industrial-financial complex over the interests of the world's people.

Almost two million have been slaughtered in Iraq alone since the U.S. sanctions and the mass destruction of that nation conducted under the universally discredited pretext of eliminating the Saddam Hussein government's non-existent "weapons of mass destruction." Libya was similarly laid to waste by NATO relentlessly terror bombing that nation for one year, reducing Libya to yet another "failed state." After fourteen years of war, the longest in U.S. history, U.S. troops and U.S.-funded privatized death squad armies operate with impunity in Afghanistan today, while in Egypt the U.S.-backed military dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi rounded up and murdered 12,000 el-Muslims – supporters of the democratically-elected government of Mohamed Morsi. Yemen, already the poorest country in the region, is being bombed incessantly and facing widespread starvation and lack of basic needs of survival.

While the Western governments and their Gulf allies claim to be united in fighting ISIS, in fact, much of the attacks are on Syrian government forces, other real foes of ISIS, like the Kurds, and of course, civilians, not wanting to strengthen the hand of President Bashar al-Assad by weakening his enemies. Indeed, central to French and U.S. policies in Syria is the removal of



the Assad government and not any weakening of ISIS or other terrorist forces. It is more than ironic that the French government, like the U.S., takes care to avoid bombing those terrorists whose aim is to remove Assad.

It is no secret that the chief U.S. allies in the region, the Saudi Arabian and other gulf state monarchies, provide ISIS with critical military and financial support, with the full knowledge and complicity of the U.S. Today, ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria, including the Al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, occupy 5/6 of Syria. Indeed, following U.S. multi-billion dollar failed efforts to create CIA-controlled armed forces to similarly depose the Assad government, U.S. policy today has shifted to providing military and financial aid to the very organizations it has deemed to be terrorist in the past.

To add to their war crimes, the U.S. and Saudis prefer systematically bombing medical facilities and weddings, while abetting the growth and danger of ISIS and their ilk.

Such care is not taken with regard to the already in progress French campaigns to limit the civil and democratic rights of French Muslim communities, today subjected to massive surveillance, discrimination, arrest and persecution. The French constitution and other laws are in the process of being re-written to eliminate hard won protections of civil liberties.

While the French government has decreed that the United Nations November 30 – December 12 world climate conference in Paris will take place on schedule, with some 40,000 heads of state, elected officials and corporate representatives present, as well as approved representatives of "civil society," the long planned

Paris protests where one million were expected to attend, have been banned. With no security justification, climate protests that challenge government and corporate policies that threaten life on earth itself are today banned!

The United National Antiwar Coalition stands opposed to all U.S. and allied imperialist intervention in Syria, Iraq and the Middle East. In truth, the horrors that we witness across this battered and blighted region today are the direct result of U.S. wars, interventions and sanctions. Had this not been the case, had the people of the Middle East been able to exercise their right to self-determination, free from all imperialist intervention in all its manifestations, they would have long ago been fully capable of resolving their internal conflicts.

The tragic colonial history of this region, long ago carved up between the post WWI and WWII great power allies has been the imposition of one after another dictator while the people's history has been one after another struggle to free themselves from foreign domination.

UNAC demands:

No to racist discrimination and Islamophobia!

Civil and democratic rights for all!

No to all imperialist wars and interventions!

U.S. and all imperialist troops Out Now!

Self-determination for the nations of the Middle East!

Provide shelter and aid to the millions of refugees displaced by war and economic ruin!

*\*Fire This Time fully supports and endorses this UNAC statement -FTT Editorial*



planted within the heads of hundreds of thousands of people, not only in Europe, but around the world. In fact, just hours after the terrorist attacks in Paris the refugee camp in Calais, France was lit on fire.

In the United States, the country most responsible for creating the refugee crisis itself, 24 state governors publicly declared that they would not accept refugees in their states, although they have no actual power to enforce this. In Canada, Brad Wall, the premier of Saskatchewan also said that refugees were not welcome in his Province (although under the new Liberal refugee plan Saskatchewan is set to receive 850 Syrian refugees). To put this in context, the U.S. government has so far only committed to admitting a disgustingly low 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year.

That these racist and Islamophobic ideas can be

expressed so publicly and outright, and receive support from some working and poor people in Canada and the U.S. is a testament to the effectiveness of the anti-Muslim campaign. This is a campaign that has especially been ramped up since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in NYC and the invasion of Afghanistan. The capitalist class in imperialist countries is certainly not interested in working and poor people here in the U.S. and Canada developing more sympathy and solidarity with refugees who are fleeing their wars and occupations.

Although the majority of refugees entering Europe this year have come from three Middle Eastern countries pinned directly under the boot of the U.S. military, there are also a large number of refugees that have made dangerous crossing to Europe from African countries. To further divide people, Western governments are also enforcing a distinction between refugees and so-

called economic migrants. Although these definitions may be of some significance under existing international law, on a human level and for poor and working people, there is not in fact any distinction. Refugees from countries in Africa, such as Eritrea are also fleeing devastation caused by imperialist intervention. This includes both the direct intervention of the U.S. backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, as well as the continuous violence and extreme poverty caused by a legacy of colonization and the exploitation of resources by foreign governments.

### Broken Promise - Syrian Refugees in Canada



**European governments response to keeping out Refugees. We say: (Open the Borders Now!**

For many people in Canada, the question of accepting Syrian refugees was an important recent election issue, so much so that Syrian refugees have been one of the first issues addressed by the new Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. The Liberal party platform prior to the election read, "Many Canadians have already offered to help those fleeing Syria, and it is time for the federal government to offer more help, too. We have a responsibility to expand our refugee targets and give more victims of war a safe haven in Canada. To that end, we will expand Canada's intake of refugees from Syria by 25,000 through immediate government sponsorship..."

In late November, Justin Trudeau broke his election promise and announced a new and reduced plan. Now the government of Canada has committed to bringing only 10,000 refugees (both government sponsored and privately sponsored) by the end of December. By the end of

February they say another 15,000 will arrive. This brings the total number of Syrian refugees to 25,000 (again, both government sponsored and privately sponsored). One year from now, at the end of 2016 is when they expect to have fulfilled their initial commitment to bring 25,000 government sponsored refugees to Canada. The Liberal government has also introduced criteria into the selection of refugees that excludes single men from the possibility of being chosen, indicating that they have bought into promoting the refugee = terrorist argument too.

So what changed? Justin Trudeau has himself cited the terrorist attacks in Paris and security concerns of people in Canada

as one of the factors influencing the decision of the government of Canada to reduce its earlier commitment. Outside of that, they have claimed that provincial service agencies need more time to properly coordinate and to be able to accept so many refugees.

However, behind all of these excuses, Canada is still the second largest country on earth with plenty of human

and natural resources to accept far more than 25,000 government sponsored refugees in the next year. Fire This Time continues to demand that Canada immediately accept 50,000 refugees, with full legal and human rights. Over the next year, we demand that Canada accept at a minimum 150,000 refugees. This is the least that the government of Canada can do to take responsibility for its complicity in the wars and occupations in the Middle East and Africa, including the bombing of Syria and Iraq.

### What is the Solution to the Refugee Crisis?

Despite the coming of cold weather and increasingly dangerous sea crossing, refugees fleeing countries destroyed by imperialist wars and occupations continue risk their lives for the shores of Europe. In the month of October alone 220,000 refugees entered Europe.

No amount of fencing, violence and intimidation will stop people facing no



future and no life in their home countries. It is our responsibility to demand that Europe and all imperialist countries and their allies open the doors to refugees now, but it is also our responsibility as poor and working people living in Canada to unite and fight to end imperialist wars and occupations.

As we look towards the coming year, the U.S.-led war machine is showing no signs of slowing down on its deadly path. Not only is the French government now bombing Syria with a renewed brutality in the name of fighting IS, but the U.S. government has committed to continuing its support for so-called moderate rebels in Syria. Already, \$600 million has been dedicated to supporting Syrian rebels in the upcoming National Defense Authorization Act budget. Here in Canada, although the Liberal government

has said that Canadian fighter jets and the Canadian bombing of Iraq will stop when the mission expires in March, they have also pledged their continuing support for the U.S.-led coalition further dividing and destroying Iraq and Syria in the name of "fighting IS terrorists."

As peace loving people we cannot forget the words of the refugee from Afghanistan who said "I am not interested to go to Europe, Europe is not better for me. Afghanistan is better for me, but they took Afghanistan away from me. They do not let me be in Afghanistan."

We must unite to stop this new era of war and occupation and defending refugees is part of this fight!

Imperialist hands off the Middle East and Africa!

Open the doors to all refugees now!

## HOME

*By Warsan Shire, Somali-British poet*

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark.

you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city  
running as well.

your neighbours running faster  
than you, the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind  
the old tin factory is  
holding a gun bigger than his body,  
you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

no one would leave home unless home  
chased you, fire under feet,  
hot blood in your belly.

it's not something you ever thought about  
doing, and so when you did -  
you carried the anthem under your breath,  
waiting until the airport toilet  
to tear up the passport and swallow,  
each mouthful of paper making it clear that  
you would not be going back.

you have to understand,  
no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land.

who would choose to spend days  
and nights in the stomach of a truck  
unless the miles travelled  
meant something more than journey.

no one would choose to crawl under fences,  
be beaten until your shadow leaves you,  
raped, then drowned, forced to the bottom  
of  
the boat because you are darker, be sold,

starved, shot at the border like a sick animal,  
be pitied, lose your name, lose your family,  
make a refugee camp a home for a year or two  
or ten,  
stripped and searched, find prison everywhere  
and if you survive  
and you are greeted on the other side  
with  
go home blacks, refugees  
dirty immigrants, asylum seekers  
sucking our country dry of milk,  
dark, with their hands out  
smell strange, savage -  
look what they've done to their own countries,  
what will they do to ours?

the dirty looks in the street  
softer than a limb torn off,  
the indignity of everyday life  
more tender than fourteen men who  
look like your father, between  
your legs, insults easier to swallow  
than rubble, than your child's body  
in pieces - for now, forget about pride  
your survival is more important.

i want to go home,  
but home is the mouth of a shark  
home is the barrel of the gun  
and no one would leave home  
unless home chased you to the shore  
unless home tells you to  
leave what you could not behind,  
even if it was human.

no one leaves home until home  
is a damp voice in your ear saying  
leave, run now, i don't know what  
i've become.

## OUR HERITAGE



**Djamilia Bouhired**  
1935

*Algerian Revolutionary and  
Independence Fighter. Djamilia  
joined the Algerian National  
Liberation Front (FLN) while  
a student activist to fight for  
Algerian Independence from French  
colonialism.*

"I am pleased that my life has meaning and a direction that I chose from the very beginning, which is that of the Algerian people's struggle against colonialism and oppression from foreigners...I cannot express my happiness to be in the maquis better than by briefly taking stock of my positive experiences: Firstly, I became aware of the superiority of our organisation although I already knew that our struggle needed fighters and leaders. I understood that our army encompasses everything and assigns everybody the appropriate role and gives them the necessary responsibility.... Secondly and equally important, I understood that the enormous apparatus that our leaders have rapidly set up rests on solid and proven foundations such as the confidence, devotion, participation and even heroism of our civilian population."



of the Americans.

However, it is not just safety and security which have been stolen from these refugees, but entire lives and homelands. Said one young man interviewed by al Jazeera "Syria is my life, my home. I love Syria. But I lost Syria."

### Refugees in their own Country

The number of refugees arriving in Europe seems staggering. However, there are millions more who are internally displaced – refugees in their own country. Nearly one million Afghans live in makeshift refugee camps around the country, often without access to clean drinking water, food, or basic sanitation facilities. Many children and elderly die in these camps during Afghanistan's cold winters.

More than 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Half of them are children. Nearly five million of those displaced are in ISIS-controlled areas and cannot be reached by international aid organizations, according to the IDMC.

Across the region, the number of people who are displaced in their own country, hoping that they will one day be able to return home, only increases: nearly one and a half million displaced in Yemen. Four million displaced in Iraq. Over four hundred thousand displaced in Libya. More than a quarter of a million forced out of their homes in Palestine (IDMC statistics).

Beyond the borders of their own countries, there are millions more refugees that we don't see. In fact, the vast majority of refugees are hosted by developing nations. Pakistan and Iran together host around 2.5 million Afghan refugees. Lebanon, a country of just four million, hosts one million refugees, most of them Syrian and Palestinian. This means one in four people in Lebanon is a refugee. Turkey and Jordan have taken on millions of refugees as well. In fact, third world countries host 80% of the world's refugee population.

### Refugees and Migrants: Both Victims of War and Occupation

It is almost impossible to comprehend the sheer number of refugees in the world today, each of them with a name and a story to tell. However, the 60 million refugees in the world today are only a small portion of the world's total migrant population of 232 million. Although

governments worldwide are quick to draw a line between 'economic migrants' and 'refugees' the truth is that the vast majority of those leaving their countries are fleeing the same thing: violence, poverty, and a life which has become no longer livable. The United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 defined refugees as a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country". This is the international standard generally used to determine admissibility of refugees – but what if you are one of the millions of people who are fleeing not persecution, but the violence or unliveable conditions brought by war? By this definition, you may not be eligible for refugee status, even if you were fleeing a country where your home had been destroyed, family and friends killed, and where there

was no job or hope for your future. Sadly, this is the situation that many have found themselves in. A number of countries, including Germany, have begun sending back Afghans who they classify as 'migrants' rather than refugees.

In the end, does it matter whether a human life will be lost by murder or by starvation? By bombs or by lack of shelter? The poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic necessities created by more

than a decade of war and occupation are as deadly as bombs or terrorism.

### International Response

The international response to this refugee crisis has been divided, especially in Europe and North America. Some governments have taken an outright hostile stance towards refugees. Slovenia and Hungary erected razor-wire fences along their borders in an attempt to prevent refugees even passing through their countries. Republican presidential



**Afghan men search for the bodies of people killed in a NATO airstrike in Logar province June 6, 2012**



**The charred remains of the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Afghanistan after it was repeatedly hit by US airstrikes. October 2015**

candidates in the US have spoken out against accepting refugees, or have called for only those who are Christian. Several governments have placed ads in Middle Eastern newspapers, telling asylum seekers that they will be turned away. These xenophobic government policies and unfounded accusations of terrorism by both politicians and media have fuelled a rise in Islamophobic attacks and anti-refugee sentiment in many countries, especially in the wake of the terrorist



attack in Paris earlier this month. Anti-Muslim and anti-refugee demonstrations have cropped up across Europe and the US, and several mosques have been vandalized or deliberately set ablaze.

On the other hand, there has been an incredible outpouring of support for refugees from many people around the world. Citizens in Europe have formed grassroots organizations to give food, clothing and blankets to refugees as they make their trek to safety. Many have volunteered to take refugees into their homes or offered them employment. German soccer fans made their support for refugees public with huge “refugees welcome” signs at soccer matches, and millions have expressed their support for refugees on social media.

Several governments have agreed to take in refugees, but far too few to make a significant impact in the crisis. The US has pledged to take in just 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016 – but is unlikely to even

come anywhere close to that number, as they have only taken in 2,000 Syrian refugees in the last four years due to a screening process that bars nearly all refugee candidates from the country. The UK is taking in just 20,000 in the next five years. Germany is taking in the most – 800,000 this year alone. Sadly, the decision on how many refugees to take in is being made not based on human need but political calculation. Even Germany has admitted that its more welcoming stance on refugees, while better than many other countries, is based on their need to increase their shrinking population and workforce.

While these commitments to take in tens or even hundreds of thousands of refugees may seem generous, they are really a small contribution from such wealthy countries when it is poor countries bearing the brunt of this mass exodus of humanity.

Of course, we must also remember that it is many of the countries who are today closing their borders to refugees who are themselves responsible for this crisis to begin with. Yes, there have been previous waves of refugees from wars and natural disasters, but the massive scale of the recent crisis is a direct result of fourteen years of war and occupation carried out by the US, UK, Canada, and other European countries. It is no accident that the highest refugee populations in the world right now are from Syria and Afghanistan.

### Canada's Response

The new federal Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has committed to taking in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. However, they have since stated that only 10,000 will arrive in Canada by the new

year, with 15,000 more to arrive by the end of February. They have claimed this is to ensure bringing refugees in is ‘done right’. But refugees who are waiting in cold, crowded and sometimes dangerous camps cannot wait until the government of Canada is ready to have their system ‘right’. Their lives are at risk right now, and they should be brought to Canada without delay.

While Trudeau's Liberal government may be more welcoming to refugees than their Conservative predecessors, still too little is being done to save lives and relieve the immediate suffering of those who no longer have a country to return to. The Canadian government should offer to accept 50,000 refugees immediately, and welcome them to the country with full legal and human rights.

### Destroying Lives for Profit

The current wave of men, women, and children fleeing their countries is a direct result of the new era of war and occupation which began following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Could we expect any other result from a decade-plus campaign of bombings, occupation, and support of corrupt politicians and even terrorist organizations?

The US and their allies have claimed repeatedly that they are ‘defending human rights’ and ‘fighting terrorism’ in each of the countries they have invaded. Yet in each country they have occupied or bombed, the human rights situation has only deteriorated. Today, the people of the region are now faced with ISIS – the largest and most ruthless terrorist organization yet, which came to rise as a direct result of US intervention in Iraq and Syria.

Today it is clear that the intention of the US and their allies – including Canada – was never to stop terrorism or create a better life for people in the Middle East or North Africa. If their intentions are truly so good-hearted, why have they now turned their backs on refugees from the countries which they are claiming to help?

### New Era of War and Occupation and the Reorganization of the Global Economy

The new era of war and occupation which defines our world today is a move by imperialist countries, led by the US, to avert a global capitalist crisis and remap the international market in their favour. This movement began after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, opening a



**Tens of thousands of people protesting in the U.S. against the war in Afghanistan. Protests began in 2001 and continue today. End the War!**



**Hundreds of Afghan women chant slogans against NATO and U.S. forces condemning the killing of Afghan civilians by NATO and U.S. airstrikes. Kabul, Afghanistan 2010**



new era in global politics and economy. In the early 1990s, the Pentagon and several important US think-tanks began calling for the US to assert its military dominance in order to maintain or gain control over key economic and strategic areas of the world.

There are three main components to this plan: firstly, they aim to reorganize global markets in their favour by regaining control of trade markets and resources lost to them in the anti-colonial uprisings of the twentieth century.

Secondly, they aim to control and maintain an upper hand over Russia and China, which are two of the biggest potential competitors for the US. Thirdly, they aim to maintain control over Iran, which has maintained its independence and been an important source of support for anti-imperialist movements in the region for the last three decades. In practice, this plan involves installing puppet governments in third world countries and invading or occupying countries whose governments refuse to comply with US demands.

Although this plan is led by the US, other imperialist countries such as Canada, the US, UK, France and Germany have joined in this unholy alliance in order to ensure their respective corporations and capitalist classes get their share of the global economic pie.

The fact that the 'war on terror' has now dragged on for a decade and a half is not simply a matter of ineptitude or misguided policies on behalf of the US or their allies. It is part of a carefully crafted plan to ensure that the world's power remains in the hands of a small, powerful minority.

While the current refugee crisis is primarily a result of the new era of war and occupation which has opened since 9/11, it is only part of a larger crisis which has existed for decades. Hundreds of millions have been driven from their homes not only due to war but also due to poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. Recent years have seen an increasing number of people forced to leave their homes due to ongoing droughts and rising sea levels as a result of climate change. All of these crises find their roots in the capitalist economic system, which

privileges a small, wealthy elite while condemning the vast majority of people – in the rich countries as well as in the third world – to starvation and injustice. The new era of war and occupation is an attempt to rebalance the capitalist system at the expense of humanity.

### What Can We Do?

As I was conducting research for this article, I came across two heart-wrenching stories of refugees which I feel compelled to share. The first is the



story of Samira, a young girl living in the Moussa-Taleb refugee camp in Lebanon. She says:

"My name is Samira. I am 8 years old and I come from Aleppo... Five months ago we had to flee from Aleppo because our home was destroyed by

the bombs. There were many bombs in Syria. I still remember how a bomb's splinter went straight into my friend's heart. I don't remember how it happened, just that I found her lying on the street bleeding. I miss my home country and I want to return one day because I love Syria. There is nothing here in the camp that makes me happy... My message for Europe is: Please end the war in Syria." (Caritas interview)

The second story is that of Rasha Alsayed, an English teacher from Damascus who was with her family on the Serbia-Hungary border:

"Even if they won't let us pass... take my kid to Germany, or any other safe place, it doesn't matter. Take our kids to Germany and I will go back to Syria. My right to live a safe life? I don't want this right for myself. I want it for my kids. To be able to go to school. This is a simple right, no?" (SkyNews interview)

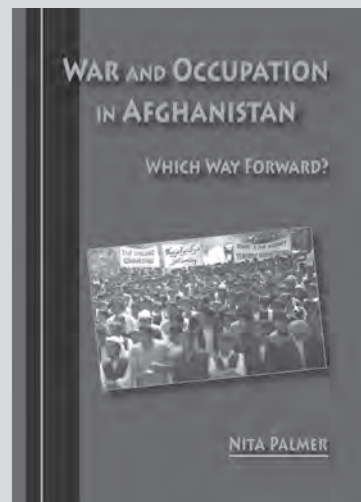
As people living in the relative comfort of Canada, we must ask ourselves: how can our consciences allow us to live another day without acting to help Samira, whose young eyes have already seen more horror than most of us could imagine? How can our consciences allow us to turn our backs on Rasha, who is so desperate to save her children as to give up her own right to safety? If as mine your heart cannot take one more day of this suffering, then we must act together, now.

The most immediate step that must be taken to alleviate the refugee crisis is for governments in wealthy countries around the world to take in a truly fair share of refugees, immediately and without bureaucratic sidestepping and delays. We must call on the government of Canada not only to meet their promise of bringing 25,000 refugees by the end of 2015, but to increase that number to 50,000.

However, simply bringing in more refugees is not enough – we must call for an immediate end to the wars, occupations, and bombings which are the source of this acute crisis. This requires not just intentions but action – joining or organizing rallies, forums, petition campaigns, and other creative actions to educate, organize, and mobilize ourselves against war, occupation, and injustice around the world. In this way, perhaps we can take the first step to ending the capitalist system which is destroying so many beautiful lives and begin building a world of justice, peace, and equality for all. Humanity's future depends on it.

### Battle of Ideas Press

#### WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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battle to achieve  
the true liberation  
of our people”**

**-Hugo Chavez**

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